





C. J. Burdett

--Goldwin Smith publishes in the *Canadian Month'y* an article on "The Immortality of the Soul," in which he holds that there is no absolute proof of a future state, but, in the absence of anything to the contrary, we are bound to accept the great mass of evidence which makes a future life an extreme probability.

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IMMORTALITY

OR

ANNIHILATION?

THE QUESTION

OF A

FUTURE STATE

DISCUSSED AND DECIDED BY THE

ARGUMENTS OF REASON.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN the county of B—— died not long since a private gentleman, who had not advanced beyond the middle term of life, and who left behind him a manuscript on the subject of a Future State; the first portion of which, forming a complete work in itself, is here submitted to the Public.

The writer was indebted to his father not only for a good estate, but also for an excellent education. It was not long before he was universally acknowledged to be a young man possessing superior qualities both of head and heart. Initiated by his teachers into the belief in revealed religion, he lived content in this faith till he became his own master, and could read what books he pleased. Doubts then arose in his mind. His faith in revelation was shaken, and with it his conviction of the first truths. If he had hitherto needed no other evidence of them than the idea: *The Bible says so*—now, that this idea had lost all force with

him, he suddenly found himself completely forlorn, and was like a man whose house, in which he has dwelt in comfort and security, is swallowed up before his face, together with the ground it stands on.

From this period he had to contend with the most painful of all uncertainties in regard to his future destination. The intimations of Christian revelation on this subject had ever been considered by him as the finest portion of the Bible; and his heart therefore bled when he found that he could no longer derive from it that satisfaction which he had formerly done. Philosophers had robbed him of his peace of mind—of philosophers he demanded it again. He read every work connected with this to him most important subject, but finding that what one author gave him another was sure to take away, he shut up all his books, and resolved himself to institute an inquiry concerning that point on which every thing seemed to him to depend. For this investigation he prepared himself in the most solemn manner at the grave of his father, and vowed not to desist till his mind had arrived at full conviction. To this period he deferred all other concerns: nor would he think of forming any plan for his life, till he had satisfied himself—whether there is a future state after death or not.

During the whole time that he was engaged in

this investigation his temper was extremely unequal. Sometimes he was like a man whose every wish is gratified; at others he resembled one who is bereft of his all. Those about him erroneously attributed these extraordinary variations to mere caprice. At length this state ceased; a settled serenity succeeded, and became the permanent characteristic of his disposition.

Convinced of his everlasting continuance in the rank of thinking beings, the young philosopher now laid down, in conformity with this conviction, a plan for his future life, and appeared in a totally altered character. He who could not before be induced to attend to any business, or to form any connections, now displayed indefatigable activity in every pursuit calculated to promote the welfare of his fellow-creatures, contracted friendships and intimacies with the wise and the good, opened his heart to love, and founded a domestic society, the enviable happiness of which was entirely his work. He was seen to seek pleasures with avidity; but such pleasures only as are worthy of a being destined to immortality, and as he could share with others. If misfortune befel him he bore it with manly resignation, and taught his family to imitate his example. The unexpected discovery which he had occasion to make, that he should not be long-lived, disturbed not his serenity. On the contrary, when he perceived that death was

approaching, he became every day more cheerful. In this tone of mind he continued to the very last, when he assembled his family about him, blessed them with a smile, and expired with the words, "*I am only going before you; we shall meet again!*"

At a time when the spirit of inquiry is daily becoming more general, it is not improbable that the minds of many may be assailed by the same doubts that shook the religious faith of the writer of the following pages. The Editor firmly believes that in such the series of meditations which carried conviction to his bosom cannot fail to produce equally happy results. Though the arguments here advanced and the conclusions drawn from them may be confidently expected to exercise this salutary influence on persons of all ages and all conditions, whose understandings are not wholly uncultivated; still it is to youth of either sex about to enter the world that their serious consideration is most particularly recommended, as tending to fix them in those principles which can alone enable them to act, under every circumstance and in every situation of life, in a manner worthy of the reason with which they are endowed and the high destination to which they are called.

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IMMORTALITY,

OR

ANNIHILATION.

FIRST MEDITATION.

IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO MY PEACE OF MIND THAT I SHOULD KNOW WHETHER I AM DESTINED FOR A LIFE AFTER DEATH OR NOT.

O THE torturing uncertainty in which I am involved ! at times nothing appears to be more clearly proved than that this life is but the dawn of my existence ; at others it seems to be a manifest delusion to expect a state beyond the grave. O Father ! by thy ashes, no human being can be more wretched than I am !

But am I not myself the creator of this misery ? Why not let things take their course and await the issue, be it what it may ? If it turns out that there is a future life, so much the better ! it will then be quite time enough to rejoice on account of it ; but, if in dying I cease to exist, there is an end of the matter. When I am no more, I cannot even know that I am no more ; consequently non-existence cannot then give

me any pain. Annihilation, so far from being in itself an unpleasant state, is no state at all. Nothing cannot have properties.

Ought the idea of annihilation to give me at present any pain? If it did, it would be entirely my own fault. Why should I imagine something horrible where in reality there is nothing horrible. Those who find, not so much non-existence itself, as the conception that they shall some time or other cease to exist, so hideous, are merely under the morbid influence of confused ideas. From daily experience they know that when they lose any important good they feel pain for the loss of it. To suffer loss and to feel pain have therefore become in their minds inseparable ideas. When they then think that some time or other they shall lose every thing, this habitual association of the two ideas calls forth the extreme pain which they shall once feel at the loss of all they possess. As they felt poor after being robbed, for instance, so it seems to them as if they should feel inexpressibly miserable when deprived of their existence. As, when their house was consumed by fire, they found themselves to their sorrow destitute of a habitation, so it seems to them that when they are annihilated they shall find themselves, to their extreme anguish, destitute of existence. As they once stood beside the remains of a dear friend, mourning that he was no more, so they seem to be standing beside their own coffin and to be incapable of consolation because they are deposited in

it. But are not these mere delusions of the imagination?

No—I feel no fear whatever of annihilation, and it is therefore not from any apprehension of this kind that I am desirous of knowing whether there is a future state or not. When in this life I lose any good, I, the loser, am left behind; but if I lose my existence, there is none to feel this loss. Or am I perhaps compounded of two essences, one of which sustains the loss of existence, and the other deplors the loss sustained? The idea that I should be suffering wrong by annihilation I cannot for a moment entertain. As I see that every thing around me once began to be and in time ceases to be, I cannot think it at all strange that I, who evidently once began to exist, should some time or other also cease to exist.

But it is on another account important,—nay of the last importance—to me, that I should arrive at conviction either of the one or of the other: either that I do continue to exist in death, or that I do not. It is obvious that in each of these two cases a totally different plan must be pursued. If every thing terminates with this life, I must conduct myself in a different manner from what I ought to do, if death is but the transition to a future state.—Or, shall I give myself no farther concern about the matter, and merely deem both possible—that there may be a future state, and that there may not? If so, I shall be incessantly at variance with myself; my life will be a zigzag

course ; it will not be governed by any fixed principle ; it will not form a whole, but a medley of contradictions, sometimes denoting the believer in a future state, at others the believer in annihilation.

On this point then I must absolutely satisfy myself ; and indeed I think it wrong in any person who has attained the age of mature understanding, to enter upon life without having settled in his own mind the question of his destination. It is perhaps to this neglect alone that the inconsistent conduct of so many is to be attributed.

If there is no future state, I am destined exclusively for this world : in that case, reason commands me to live for this world alone. It is a thing of sense ; I am a creature of sense ; I must of course seek my chief happiness in sensual pleasures. I must strive to procure as many of them as possible ; nay, I must be insatiably greedy of them, merely taking care not to abridge my existence by such gratifications : I must shun whatever would disturb me in their enjoyment, and reply to those who would call me to account for my conduct : “ Let me alone, I shall live but once ! ” I should be a fool to think of any other cultivation of my understanding than that which would render me more ingenious in devising new gratifications of sense. I should be a still greater fool, were I to waste the time, which as an independent man I can devote to this purpose, in professional pursuits, or even in philanthropic actions. But I should be the greatest of all fools were I to think of suffering for others, or of

making the smallest sacrifice for the public good. I must avoid contracting any friendship, unless I were positively certain that my friend would survive me; because otherwise the last separation from him would distress me, as the survivor. I must despise pure and constant love; because it would prepare nothing but torture for my heart. I must renounce the hope of posterity; because if wife and children were to die before me I should be inconsolable, and if I were to expire in their arms, the sight of them would uselessly aggravate the anguish of the final struggle.

If, on the contrary, there is a future state, reason enjoins me not to live for this world alone, but to live for it only in so far as to prepare myself by it for another life; for, if there are two states for me, the second must be founded on the first—or, to what end should I have received this first? Nay, I cannot help believing that it will be out of my power to compensate there for any thing I may have neglected here towards my future happiness. Moral cultivation must then be my chief object; since it is the moral part of me, the mind, that exists after death. I must therefore enjoy the pleasures of sense only in as far as they are necessary or contributory to my inward improvement. At any rate they ought by their enjoyment to stimulate me to moral cultivation, to strengthen and to render me more persevering in it. If they possess none of these qualities, they are pleasures beneath my dignity: and if they have a contrary effect, if they render me indifferent to my internal improvement, if they make

me worse instead of better, I must spurn them from me instead of grasping at them, I must trample them under foot instead of pressing them to my heart. If they effect this deterioration only when they are too often or too long indulged in, I must determine by this standard the frequency and the duration of their enjoyment; for I must then consider them not as my end, but merely as the means of attaining that end. If there is a future state, I must certainly exercise my intellectual powers on external objects, but not dwell exclusively upon them, because in death these will cease to be objects for me. I must enrich myself with a superior kind of knowledge and with the noblest sentiments, and cultivate my judgment, my taste, and my relish for the great and the beautiful, because these, being properties of the mind, will continue to be mine even after death. I must be diligent in what is good, and study on every occasion to promote the welfare of my fellow-creatures; nay, continue my exertions, not only without reward, but even in spite of misrepresentation and hatred. I must suffer innocently, and be prepared to sacrifice every thing to truth and virtue; because, without sowing such seed here no harvest is to be expected hereafter. If there is a future state, I may confidently follow the impulses of my benevolent heart, which instigate me to contract the most sacred ties of friendship and of love, and cheerfully enter the sphere of domestic life, because all these connexions will continue to subsist like myself, and because the greater the number of those who

are wholly or partially indebted to me for their happiness here, the greater will be my felicity hereafter.

Is it possible to conceive a stronger contrast between two modes of thinking and acting—that is to say, between the way in which I must think and act, if there is a future state for me, and the way in which I must think and act if there is no future state? For which of these two ways am I now to decide?

If I adopt such a plan of life as if there were a future state, and there should afterwards prove to be none, I shall have been an egregious fool. I shall indeed not then grieve about it, because I shall no longer exist; but I shall justly be an object of ridicule in the eyes of all thinking beings. If I form my plan as if there were no future state, and there should afterwards prove to be such a state, what reason should I have to condemn and execrate myself! But would all my self-execrations then avail to rectify the fatal error? Once more then I repeat—I must know what I have to expect. Be it which it will—a future state, or annihilation—what need I care, so I but know which? My plan shall then be framed accordingly.

SECOND MEDITATION.

THE BELIEF IN REVELATION IS NOT SUFFICIENT
TO SATISFY ME IN REGARD TO A FUTURE STATE :
I MUST MEDITATE UPON IT MYSELF.

BUT why do I not lighten this labour for myself ? Why not rather return to the belief in revelation ? It would then be decided that I should have a future existence. Thousands and tens of thousands find in this course conviction and peace of mind ; are not these all the better for it ? Did not this belief once carry conviction and peace into my mind also ?

As to those thousands and tens of thousands, I envy them not, if their mere belief in revelation renders them believers in a future state ; but not one of them is sure that he shall not some time or other find himself in the same predicament in which I am at present. The first book that falls into his hands, the first conversation with a stranger, the first hour devoted to reflection, may shake his faith in revelation, and he will then be just where I now am. For my own part, I confess indeed that by means of revelation I formerly

felt convinced and easy in regard to a future state ; but, having lost my faith in revelation, I cannot return to it if I would.

I have lately read the Bible through once more, and have found that it offers not a single *evidence* of a future state, but only *bare assertions* on that subject. These its assertions, however, ought no more to convince me than the bare assertions of other things which I meet with in other books ; for the Bible is nothing but a collection of information and advice given by well disposed men of antiquity to their rude contemporaries. Whoever calls it a revelation can only call it so with reference to the age in which it was written : thus wise individuals instructed their totally ignorant fellow-men in matters which of themselves they would never have hit upon, and thus did they actually reveal, that is, make known, these matters to them. As these instructions consisted of nothing but bare assertions, it behoves me first to examine every scriptural assertion just the same as any assertion that I find in other books, and to enquire whether it be correct. Thus then it is evident, that nothing but my own reflection can convince me whether the doctrine of an existence after death, taught by the Bible also, be correct or not.

Formerly I believed in the Bible, because I believed that it was the word of God. My tutor had instilled this notion into me from my childhood, and our minister at a later period said the same thing ; but neither the one nor the other ever proved it to me : nay, they never

told me in what sense the expression, *the word of God*, was to be understood. As it could not but convey some idea, I explained it to myself in this manner: that God had written and spoken with me in the Bible, just as my brother who was then abroad spoke with me in his letters—and this I most firmly believed without any farther evidence, at an age when one does not think of asking for evidences. Now, however, I entertain a different notion.

It is easily said, that the Bible is the word of God, and of course all that is written there must be believed without enquiry. Such a mode of gaining belief in truths and doctrines is suited only to the infancy and adolescence of mankind, but is no longer adapted to the present day. If I am to believe that the Bible is the word of God, it is to be presumed that I must first believe in God himself. But how am I then to convince myself that there is a God? Because I find it so written in the Bible?—In this case you would first prove God by the word of God, and afterwards the word of God by God. The existence of God must therefore be absolutely demonstrated to me from reason. If then the first truth, God, be capable of demonstration from reason, must not every thing else that is said to be true be demonstrable from it also?

And when God has been demonstrated to me from reason, how am I to convince myself that the Bible is his word? Must I believe it because it is so written in the Bible? Can testimony given in one's own cause,

and in one's own behalf, be deemed valid? It is not the Bible then that must declare itself to be the word of God, but God himself must declare it to be such; and this declaration must reach every one who is expected to regard it as his word, and that so distinctly, as not to admit of the raising of any doubt against it. This again cannot take place in any other manner than by means of reason. Every other kind of declaration would, inasmuch as we were expected to recognize it as a declaration of God's, again require a declaration of God's; this would require another, and so on *ad infinitum*. If then reason must first decide whether the Bible is the word of God, how is it to do this? Certainly in no other way than by enquiring whether the doctrines contained in the Bible are consistent with reason, or in other words, whether they are rational, and therefore worthy of belief. Thus it is again evident, that my own reflection alone can convince me whether I ought to believe in the existence after death inculcated by the Bible.

It is not then from belief in revelation that I can believe in a future state; but from the belief in a future state the belief in revelation must absolutely spring. And if reason must thus first reveal whether the Bible be a revelation, the Bible is not the higher revelation, but reason; for reason is the revealer of the revelation.

And where, after all, do I find the doctrine of a future state laid down in the Bible? In none of the

canonical books, as they are called, of the Old Testament. From "Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return"—to: "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" and again, from: "In death there is no remembrance of thee"—to: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"—that is, again become God—and so on through all the Prophets, we everywhere find rather grounds for a contrary opinion. It is most true that whoever should be required to deduce his belief respecting the destination of man from the Old Testament alone, must believe not in a future state, but that there is no such state. It is in the apocryphal books, as they are termed, consequently, in those books which are not even reckoned a part of the word of God, that the doctrine of a future state first occurs. In the Book of Wisdom we meet with it for the first time, and this book is of much later date than the schools of the Greeks in which that doctrine was already taught—nay, it is evident that the Jews first received it from the Greeks. Long before it was positively taught by Jesus, it had been taught by Socrates. Socrates, therefore discovered it by means of reason, and this is the only fitting, as it is the only true revelation for mankind. Every other is either a wicked imposture or a pious fraud, which may indeed prove serviceable in ruder ages, but is of no benefit in more enlightened periods, nay even must

be done away with, because it evidently treats the man as a child.

I am therefore not sorry that I have lost my juvenile faith in revelation : on the contrary, I bless Fate which has so decreed. For what purpose am I gifted with reason, if I will not make use of it ? So long as I believed in revelation, so long I actually made no use of my reason. "Your papa said you must do it," was the language held by the valet, when my father was not at home ; and accordingly I did what was required. "God has said so ; you must believe it," was the injunction of my tutor before reason was thoroughly awake, and accordingly I did believe it. That system is now at an end ; I do, not what my father is said to have desired, but what Reason tells me that I ought to do ; and thus too I will believe, not what God is said to have enjoined, but what Reason tells me that I ought to believe. Let then the enquiry concerning my destination be ever so arduous a task, I am convinced that it is the only course by which I can clear up the matter.

"But how, if on finishing your enquiry, annihilation should stare you in the face as its plain and palpable result ; and you should perceive that benevolent sages, aware of this, sought rather to deter men from meditating on the subject, and to lead them to faith in revelation ?"

The only reply which I can make to this is, that if the final result proves to be annihilation, I must

resign myself to my lot. In this case, however, those sages have rendered no particular benefit to mankind by inculcating faith in revelation; on the contrary they have done it an injury, and restrained it by the doctrine of a future state, which revelation involves, from the full and free enjoyment of life. Of what avail are golden dreams! I want to know the truth: what else is of any value? If I cannot have more, I will make up my mind to be content with what I possess. If I am doomed to annihilation, still I have been a thinking being. What must the lion, what must the stag do, which are not so long-lived as I am, and have not even the faculty of thought? What the insect, that exists but a day and is then annihilated? If annihilation be my lot, I must act accordingly.

But how if, after all my enquiries, I were to arrive at no certainty either as to a future state or as to annihilation? That would indeed be a provoking disappointment. But I am not afraid of it. On a matter which so deeply concerns me, I must be able to come to some decision.

But how can I expect to be more successful than so many others who have gone before me? Some imagined that they had incontestably proved a future state for Man. Contrary to their expectations, the weakness of their arguments, and of precisely those arguments on which they built the most, was detected. Others had in their opinion proved annihilation in the most incontrovertible manner, and were afterwards convicted of a spirit of sophistry.

That may be. The former probably believed before they set about enquiring, or were at least solicitous that the affirmative should be established by the enquiry. When this is the case, possibility appears in the eyes of the enquirer as probability, and probability as certainty. The latter were perhaps strangers to virtue, attached to the gross pleasures of sense, and had reason to wish, for their part, that there were no future state. Thus their own hearts suggested their first doubts. It was not till these doubts had gained strength that they proceeded to the enquiry, and then they caught only at such ideas as nourished their doubts. They wished the result to be annihilation, and therefore it was no wonder that they drew false conclusions.

I am not in either of these predicaments. Thanks to my education I am not a vicious man, and have no cause to wish that there may not be a future state. Belief in annihilation is not requisite for my tranquillity. Most sincerely do I pity all who are in this truly deplorable predicament; for I cannot conceive any thing more miserable than a human being who is sunk so low that nothing can tranquillize him but the idea that when he dies he shall cease to exist. On the other hand, I can say, if I know any thing of myself, that the belief in a future state is not indispensably necessary for my tranquillity. If there is no such thing, there is not. Without any prepossession, then, and wholly unbiassed, I proceed to my enquiry. I feel no solicitude that this or that should result from it;

but be the result what it may I shall be content. I only desire to know whether or not, that I may arrange my plan of life accordingly. All plans are indifferent to me, but if I can avoid it I will not adopt a false one. When the question is once decided, the plan will soon be formed ; for reason will form it on the spot, and that in the only way in which it can be formed ; and if I would be a rational being I must follow its dictates be they what they will.

With confidence then I enter on the momentous enquiry. Whoever is so indifferent on the subject as I at least think myself to be cannot miss his aim ; he must discover the truth.

THIRD MEDITATION.

WHAT I UNDERSTAND BY A FUTURE STATE.

THAT the constituent parts of my body, when it is entirely dissolved, continue to exist, I believe without any enquiry. In Nature nothing is destroyed but the forms which arise from combination. The original matter is indestructible, and this does not lie useless after the dissolution of the form, but in time reappears in another shape. If my future state is to be of this nature, it is not worth a single thought. Could I call such a state *my* future state? I cannot comprehend what notions they must entertain who assert, that they shall some day sing again in the bird, flourish in the tree, and blossom in the flower? Can a person in his sober senses listen to such absurdities without a smile?

No; there cannot be a future state for me except inasmuch as that part of me which feels and thinks, which sees by means of the eye, hears by means of the ear, and has a rational consciousness of this,—in

one word, *I*, continue to exist after death. This is the point.

Hence it immediately follows that by a future state after death, I mean not a new second life, which may some time or other be allotted to me, when as they say this body shall rise from the grave, but a continuation, an uninterrupted continuation, of my present existence, in spite of that which is denominated death. If I am not to attach this idea to my future state, I would rather drop the enquiry altogether; the matter would be decided at once. It is not with existence as with music, which may begin again afresh after pauses whether short or long. Admit a single pause, a single break, in my existence, and it is all over with my existence for ever.

If I must not think of any future state independent of this body, I must of course not think of any recommencement of my existence after death. Throughout all nature we find not a single instance that constituent parts, which were once combined into a certain form, were, after the dissolution of that form, ever reunited into the same form. The thing appears at the very first blush wholly unreasonable. Had there been still power to hold the constituent parts together the form would not have fallen to pieces; whence then is to proceed the power of recomposing the form anew? And how? Shall particles which thousands of years back composed a human body, and have meanwhile been blown to and fro by all the winds of heaven, ever come together again? In this case,

it is really not enough to cut the knot and to appeal to an Omnipotent Being with whom nothing is impossible. This Omnipotent Being himself could not work such a miracle; for many of the particles, nay perhaps all that constitute my body, have already belonged to other human bodies before mine, and will hereafter again contribute to the composition of other human bodies. Thus then, at the general restoration of bodies, the same particles must be in twenty or thirty different bodies at once, which of all impossibilities is certainly one of the most impossible.

The ordinary theory of the resurrection comprehends tenets which are wholly irreconcilable. Resurrection is promised to the body, and at the same time immortality is allotted to the soul. Nay, what is still more, the souls of the righteous are represented as entering immediately after their separation from the body into the bliss prepared for them, and the souls of the wicked as being in like manner consigned immediately after death to deserved misery. Notwithstanding this we are told, that the general resurrection will be connected with a general judgment, in which sentence will be passed upon every individual, and agreeably to this sentence he will enter either the mansions of the blest or the abodes of the damned. Thus then the righteous souls are represented as being admitted into bliss before bliss is awarded to them, and the wicked as being consigned to damnation before they are condemned. Setting aside even this manifest contradiction, still the ques-

tion would arise, how the bodies and souls which have been separated ever since death could come together again at the time of the resurrection. Either the bodies must go to the souls or the souls to the bodies. As, however, the inanimate body cannot change its place, there is no other alternative than that each spirit must fetch its body. Every spirit therefore would not only enter its future abode twice, the first time without the body and the second with the body; but there is not a human being capable of answering the question, how the soul is to fetch its body. Either the whole man must be deposited in the grave, if there is to be a resurrection; or there is no such thing as a resurrection. At any rate, it is impossible to believe sincerely at one and the same time in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul.

Again—if, according to that theory, the righteous souls were already happy, and the wicked already miserable before the resurrection, they must be so without bodies. What need would they then have of the resurrection of the mouldered body? But can we form the least idea how a spirit can be happy or miserable without body? How can the world in which it exists, be it what world it will, have the least influence upon it; how can it produce changes in it; how can pleasure or pain be prepared for it, if it has no organs of sensation? In like manner—how is it to have influence on the world around it, how produce changes in it, or be of the least importance, nay

merely visible, if it has no members ? It is the body alone by which the world is its world, and the soul a citizen of the world. Without body the world cannot affect it, neither can it affect the world ; for in both cases means are wanting for the purpose. If then the righteous were actually happy before the resurrection, and the wicked miserable ; they must also have a body before the resurrection. But if they had one, what need would they have of the resurrection of the buried body ? Nay, how would they get rid of the former in order to be united to the latter ?

The theory of the resurrection then is full of contradictions, and hence it is no wonder that its adherents should very frequently contradict themselves. Sometimes they console themselves with the idea, that as soon as they have departed they shall be with Christ ; and therefore long to depart : at others they say, that we shall not rise from our graves till the return of Christ, and then go forth to meet the Lord. Sometimes they allege that it is the body only which is here sown or buried ; at others they assert, that on the day of resurrection, the dead in Christ, of course not merely the bodies of the dead, but the entire dead, will rise again.

It is therefore my firm belief that the doctrine of the resurrection was not meant by those who preached it to be taken so literally as it is at present understood. For the sake of their credit I assume, that they merely intended to illustrate the doctrine of a future state after death, a doctrine far too lofty for

their ruder age, and therefore merely represented it under the emblem of the resurrection. Had they at once stood forth and taught that man continues to exist after death, thousands would have immediately replied, that it was false, because the dead lay quietly in their graves, and whoever lay there could not possibly be alive. They preached therefore, that the dead should rise and be reanimated. There can be no doubt then that the sensible emblem of the resurrection was only designed to render the doctrine of a future state, which was not palpable to the senses, intelligible and comprehensible to the multitude. It was eventually of no consequence if the multitude did stop at the emblem ; the aim was attained, inasmuch as they learned to believe that there was more than one life for them.

Even in the wise Nazarene, who in plain terms taught the doctrine of the resurrection, it was certainly nothing more than condescension to the spirit of his nation and his age ; and it was from the same motive that he described the state of the blessed as a being at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the state of the damned as a being in everlasting fire. Had he attempted to represent to his grossly sensual contemporaries the happiness of the good as an eternal progression in wisdom and virtue, and the misery of the wicked as an eternal backwardness in both ; they would have stared in astonishment. The ancient Jew had no notion of happiness unconnected with sensible pleasure, or of damnation without sensible pain. In

like manner the Jew of antiquity had no conception of a future state *without the present body* : in order therefore to instil into him the doctrine of a future life, Jesus was necessitated to teach the resurrection. It must moreover be recollected, that Jesus found the resurrection already introduced into the system of the Pharisees, and therefore he retained the image with which his countrymen were previously familiar ; because, if he had taken it away, he would at once have taken the thing itself away also, and made his contemporaries believers in annihilation.

It is worthy of remark too, that the acute Paul proceeds a step farther in this matter. In the gospel history, the risen Jesus still bears about him the marks of his wounds and the prints of the nails, and can also partake of the fish broiled by his disciples : Paul, on the contrary, says, that the corruptible body shall rise incorruptible ; that what is sown in dishonour shall reappear in glory ; and he calls the second body emphatically a *glorified* body. More than this indeed his age could not have borne ; but herein we plainly discover the transition to the only correct notion of the matter, that is to say, if there be any truth in the matter itself.

Some of the advocates of the generally received theory of the resurrection have sought to obviate the contradictions which it manifestly involves, by giving it a different construction. They contend that the entire man is buried, and that he shall rise again entire, and represent the soul as existing meanwhile in

the grave. Hence the horrible notions of the state of the dead and the lamentations at their tombs, which, however, were not carried beyond due bounds, if these representations were correct. Gracious Heaven! what misery that must be, if, after having existed with consciousness sixty or eighty years on the surface of the earth, we were to exist in like manner with consciousness ten or a hundred times as long in the bosom of the earth! Can imagination figure to itself any thing more horrible than this?

It was no wonder then that other advocates of this doctrine should come forward, and seek to mitigate the horrors of this state by assuming a sleep of the soul. In their opinion the soul, like the body, will sit in the darkness and shadow of death, but without having a consciousness of its situation.

Convinced as I am that a resurrection is wholly out of the question, neither the fear of sufferings in the grave nor the consolation of the sleep of the soul has the least weight with me. Either I shall be entirely annihilated in death, or I must continue to exist after death without this body. The body which is buried is buried for ever, and cannot be restored to me. If, however, I continue to exist, I must certainly have a body again. But in order to this, it is not necessary that there should be a resurrection, as it is called, after a long interval. A very different kind of resurrection may take place. At the moment when my present body perishes, the future body may be instantaneously formed out of it, and thus the moment of my death

would be at the same time the moment of my resurrection.

Since, according to the assertion of revelation itself, the grosser particles composing my body are not suited to the other world, but must be left behind in the grave, I cannot see why the separation of the more subtile particles of which my future body is to be composed must be deferred several centuries or some thousands of years, and why it might not take place immediately. If a long mouldering and total reduction to dust were absolutely requisite, how would it fare with those who should not die till the very day of the supposed general resurrection? or with those who might then be still living? Here Paul furnishes us with a hint and says—These shall merely be *changed*.

It would be possible then to continue to exist without first rising again, and the separation of the future body from the present might take place in a moment! To this opinion I should cheerfully subscribe. But what does this concern me? If I am destined by Nature to exist after death, every thing else would follow of course. The only question to be solved is—whether I am so destined or not.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

A DIGRESSION UPON THE INFLUENCE OF THE BELIEF IN GOD ON THE ENQUIRY CONCERNING A FUTURE STATE.

I SPOKE of *Nature* as having destined me for a future state or not. Why did I not rather substitute God for Nature, and at once attribute to him my destiny whatever it may be?

Here I am met by the question—Before it is decided whether there is a future state for Man or not, must it not first be demonstrated whether there is a God or not?

I cannot think so. On the contrary I am of opinion that an atheist may believe the immortality of the soul as well as one who admits the existence of a God. The idea—There is no God—does not lead as a necessary consequence to the idea: Man is annihilated in death. He who has no occasion for a God to account for his origin or his present existence, has no occasion for a God to believe a future existence. The same Nature which, as he presumes,

conferred on him the faculty of living sixty or eighty years, can, according to his views, confer on him the faculty of living for ever.

Of course, if two persons were to dispute whether there is a future state for Man or not, each ought to be previously acquainted with the sentiments of the other on this subject : else if the one believes in God and the other not, and the former at the same time believes in a future state and the latter not ; the first, when he brings forward evidences deduced from God and his attributes in favour of a future state, will be met by the second with the objection, that his arguments are founded on positions which themselves require to be proved.

But at any rate, if it be admitted that there is a God, ought it not to be equally admitted that there is a future state for us mortals. If there are persons who do not believe in God but yet believe in a future state, may there not be persons who believe in God and yet doubt a future state ?

If this were not the case I should myself never have entered into this enquiry. I have no hesitation to acknowledge that I believe most sincerely in God. If then the evidences deduced from God in favour of a future state were perfectly convincing, I should have no occasion to engage in any investigation concerning a future state. As yet however, I am not convinced. Though, for example, I figure God to myself as the most beneficent being, still it does not seem thence to

follow that I am authorized to hope for immortality. God would still be a most bountiful being to me if I were even to be annihilated in death; for if I consider what prerogatives I enjoy as man above all other creatures, and with what pleasures I can embellish my existence, I must be entirely made up of ingratitude, if I were not content. Were I to assert that God would have been much more bountiful if he had made my existence everlasting, I might for the same reason desire of him a great deal more, and who knows what? I might desire that he should have placed me in a higher order of beings, that he might approve himself still more bountiful towards me.

As, however, I cannot know beforehand how far and which way my enquiries may conduct me, and whether the belief in God may not eventually be involved in them, I will review once more the series of reflections which has extorted from me the admission of that belief.

That the *primitive matter* of the world is eternal I think myself bound to admit. What should have been before it existed? Whence should it have come? If God had first created it, how could the mere will of God that matter should exist have produced matter? As I am not capable of answering all these questions, it seems to me more rational to admit the eternity of matter than to deny it. I see however that new *forms* are incessantly arising, and thence conclude, that all the forms which meet my eye once had a beginning,

though I was not present to witness their beginning. I must therefore assume *something by which the forms at least were produced.*

If I call this something *Nature*, I cannot mean any thing else by that term, which thousands employ without attaching to it any idea, than either a Being which exists independently of matter, or matter itself. In the former case I should merely be giving another name to this being and calling it *Nature*, while other men call it *God*, and I must therefore attribute to Nature all the properties that are attributed to God. But were I disposed to designate matter itself by the term *Nature*, I cannot conceive how matter, of which the form is made, could be at the same time the maker of that form.

Were I to be told that it was the primary energies of matter which made the form out of matter, I would then ask what is the meaning of the term *primary energies*? Is any precise idea attached to this expression, or is it adopted without reflection? May not many who fancy that they attach to it some idea, without being aware of it themselves, connect with primary energies the same notion that others connect with God? And if this were the case, those who refuse to believe in *God* would believe in *Gods*. If however the primary energies are the mere intrinsic efforts of matter after form, the next question is, why they affect precisely this or that form and not any other.

Were it to be replied that these efforts were *predetermined*, I would then ask by what they were so de-

terminated. I might receive for answer—By their own intrinsic essence. In this case we should not only be obliged to assume an infinite multitude of primary energies to account for the infinite diversity of forms, but should make out of the intrinsic essence of each of them an all-wise Being, which knew how to give to every form that it affected the utmost symmetry, beauty, and perfection. And thus in the end matter itself would be God, and every thing that exists would be God. As this is downright nonsense, I must assume a Being out of matter by means of which forms are produced. This Being, which I would rather call by his old name *God*, is most intimately connected with the world, has determined from all eternity the intrinsic efforts of matter after shape, and is thereby the Creator and the Preserver of all things.

In like manner as I see forms arise, I see them also dissolve ; and others of the same kind again arise ; in short I see generations follow one another. I see these follow one another in such a manner, that the one which goes before is always the cause of that which follows. Familiar as this observation is to me, still it excites my whole attention.

Though, namely, the matter of the universe is eternal, yet the earth, as an *individual planet*, is not eternal. It is only a form, and must have had a beginning as well as all other forms. If it had a beginning, there must have been upon it a first generation of all the species of beings that are to be found in it. Should these have been produced merely by the primary

energies of matter, the intrinsic essence of which had determined them to strive after those forms; it would be very extraordinary that nothing farther should be known concerning such production, either at the present day or so far back as human tradition extends. We might suppose that, in the same manner as the first generation was produced, all the subsequent generations must have been produced. Whence then proceeded the change—the succession of generations by procreation? And why should not the primary energies of matter still produce similar forms merely by their intrinsic determination to certain forms, without the present usual mode of generation? Have they, perhaps for wise reasons, spontaneously renounced that power? In short, if the primary energies of Nature cannot of themselves produce a form at the present time, neither could they of themselves have produced the first form of each species.

The observation then that successive generations follow one another by means of procreation conducts me of necessity to God. There must be another particular cause besides matter for the existence of every generation. With all of them excepting the first, it is that just mentioned. But what was the cause of the first? It is impossible to assign any other than a Being which exists out of matter—God, whose wisdom devised the diversity of forms, and who likewise deemed it befitting his wisdom to impart to the first form which he produced the faculty of producing a second, and to communicate to this second the same

faculty of procreation, and so on down to the present generation.

One of the most perfect forms that exist is the human body. My body is in the strictest sense of the term, a world in miniature. If then there is in it a something which thinks and wills, which governs it and accomplishes with it all that it is capable of—a something without whose co-operation it frequently acts in a foolish manner, and with whose separation from it, its dissolution is combined,—must there not be in the universe a something which thinks and wills in it as in its body; which governs the whole; the co-operation of which causes every thing to pursue its proper course; which repairs the disorders that inevitably arise, and on the non-existence or separation of which from it all things would have an end?—*The soul of the body, I.—The body, my world.—The soul of the universe, God.—The universe, the body of God!!!*

And then—when I survey the glory of the world, can I help thinking of a Being of whose glory it is merely a reflection? When I review in imagination all of good, and great, and fair, that is distributed throughout Nature, can I help inferring a something in which all this is really combined? When I perceive on all sides effects which not only resemble the effects of the highest human intelligence, but infinitely surpass them, can I help acknowledging an all-intelligent cause? and when I every where witness the execution of the most sublime plans, can I help

believing the existence of a most sublime framer of those plans ?

If I believe in God all is cheerfulness and light—all gloom and darkness if I do not believe. Without God all the world is a riddle to me—nay, I am a riddle to myself : I know not for what purpose all that it contains was designed ; neither do I know for what purpose I was placed in the world.

I have therefore been *compelled* to believe in God, and I do believe in him from the bottom of my heart. This is my solemn confession to myself. Nobody extorts it from me ; it is made of my own perfectly free will. Fortune has placed me in such a situation, that if I were an atheist I might proclaim it loudly and openly, without having occasion to apprehend the least worldly injury from the admission. I have found, however, that if I would be a rational being, I must be a believer in God, and experience has taught me that it was well for me that I became such : for now, whenever I act as reason dictates, the thought that the Supreme Reason approves my action elevates me much more than the action itself ; and when I enjoy pleasures, the idea that they are bestowed on me by a God of Joy renders them far sweeter than their enjoyment itself. I have yet known but little sorrow, excepting when my father was removed from me, and then I derived my chief solace from the reflection that a wiser than he had put so early a period to his career. I really believe that in future the

thought—It is the will of *God*—will be sufficient to soothe my heart under the severest afflictions.

My belief in God then is firm as a rock ; but how the belief in a future state is thence to follow, I certainly cannot at least as yet discover.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

IS THE IDEA, MAN, WHOLLY COMPRISED IN
THE IDEA, BODY?

I SPOKE of a *something in this body that feels, thinks, and wills*—but is there really such a something? May not feeling, thought, and will, be mere effects of the mechanism of the body, just like respiration, the circulation of the blood, and the preparation of the chyle? If that is the case indeed, if there is not a particular something united with the body, its existence after death is out of the question, and there is an end to my enquiry concerning a future state. Let me not be told—“This does not follow of course; think of the flute. The tone which it gives is its essence. It seems only to be lost when one piece of wood is changed for another, but always reappears with the same particular kind of structure. Now consider the *I* as the *tone*, why should not Nature continue to carve instruments, in order that an *I*, which she wishes to preserve, may not be lost?”—What! does then the flute give out a tone before some one blows

into it? It is not the tone itself, but the mere capability of tone that is its essence; and let it possess this property in ever so great perfection, it is a very different thing whether it is played by a bungler or by a master. The comparison will not hold good.

The more I reflect upon the matter, the more improbable it seems to me that sensation, thought, and will, are merely the effects of the mechanism of the body, just like respiration or the circulation of the juices. I am thoroughly convinced indeed, that, without the requisite corporeal arrangement, for which I shall once for all adopt the scholastic term, *organization*, I should not be capable of feeling and thinking; but, that the organization itself feels and thinks, or that sensation and thought are mere mechanical effects of its concordant operations, is what I never can persuade myself. Neither can I clearly comprehend how those corporeal functions arise out of the mere mechanism of the body; but this mechanism is inadequate to the elucidation of the mental functions as they are called; nay, I cannot form any conception how these could be produced by its means alone. There seems, besides, to be too prodigious a difference between the two sorts of functions to admit of our assuming one and the same cause for both. A pulsation and a witticism—an inspiration and a corollary—is it possible that both can proceed from one source? Not only are my feelings excited by present objects, but I can renew within me past impressions, and anticipate future sensations. How can the *I* here be the

organization, since it is not excited by any external cause?—or how can it create a sensation in the absence of the real object of that sensation? In like manner I think not merely what *I am obliged* to think; I think also what *I please* to think—and the latter a thousand times oftener than the former. In this case it is evident that the organization does not command, but *is commanded*? Commanded—*by what*?

My mind too, I must own, revolts at the thought that the idea Man should be *wholly* comprised in the idea body. The slightest voluntary movement, in my opinion, refutes this notion. I have, for instance, my hand in my bosom, and purpose after a while to extend it. Perfectly conscious that it is still in my bosom, I take notice what it will do. There however it remains in quiet, and is not stretched out till I say—*Now!*—when it is instantly extended. Should I be disposed to assert that it stretched itself out, or that the other hand, or one leg, or both legs, or the whole body stretched it out; why was it not stretched out before? If then neither a single part of my body nor my whole body extended it, what did produce this effect?—And if it was stretched out precisely at the moment when I said within myself—*Now!*—must not the *I* in question be a peculiar something that thinks and wills in the body?—Nay I can throw down my whole body and raise it up again, when and in what manner I will. Now if the *I* which throws it down and raises it up again were the body itself and not another something within it, why does it not throw

itself down when I do not please? Why does it not rise sooner or later than I please? I have not the least consciousness that it is a part of the body or the whole body that extends the hand, or that the whole body lays itself down; but I have the clearest consciousness that it is *I* who stretch out the one and lay down the other, and that both movements only take place expressly by *my* will. Can I deny this conviction? Does it not compel me to adopt a more exalted notion of Man, which it evidently establishes?

If I moreover ask myself, at the moment when I have a perfect consciousness of myself and of the external world,—*who* has this consciousness?—I have not the least ground for supposing that it can be attributed to individual parts of my body or to my whole body. I have even a distinct knowledge of all the parts of the body, and of the different changes that are taking place in the whole body. Has then each individual part a separate knowledge of itself? I ask my fingers if they know that I am now writing: they know nothing about it. Or have all the parts together a knowledge of the whole? I cannot but think that if each part individually has no knowledge of itself, it is impossible for them all collectively to have any collective knowledge of themselves.

The consciousness of my situation, the sense of my happiness and misery, my joys and sorrows, my opinions, judgments and resolutions, are all in the same predicament. They cannot be attributed either to individual parts, or to all the parts of the body

united, and there must consequently be a particular something in the body which feels, thinks, judges, and resolves. This something must of course need an organization to perform all this ; but the united concordant agency of the organization is not itself this something ; and therefore the idea Man is by no means wholly comprised in the idea body.

But do I not then feel that it is the head which thinks ? Do I not feel that it is the heart which wills ? Do I not feel that it is the whole body which receives sensations ?

No, I feel only that I think with my head and not with my hands or feet. I feel only that my will acts chiefly through the heart. Were it the heart itself that willed, there would be no need for thoughts to precede actions. Now my own consciousness teaches me, that without an idea of the desirable there can be no inclination, and without an idea of the detestable no aversion. And were it the head itself that thought, it could never think any thing but that to which physical sensations furnished occasion ; but this, as already observed, is by no means the case. Profound thinkers frequently determine themselves the subject of their meditations, and carefully shut out all external impressions that they may pursue those meditations without interruption.

As to sensation, it is not the whole body that receives the impression but merely the nerves ; these again are only the instruments of *my* sensations, and do not themselves feel. It is not even decided whether

I feel pain at the part injured, or only in the brain. Be this as it may, if it was the nerves themselves that felt, the feeling must either affect each individual nerve or the whole nervous system. In the latter case all feelings must be alike; in the former, what a multitude of feelings in one body! And, must not these again be under one chief feeler, to take cognisance of their sensations and appropriate them to itself. Why cannot young children, when they feel pain, point at once to the spot where they have been hurt? I, as a grown person, have already experienced pain in every part of my body. Every kind of pain differed, and left behind particular impressions upon me. When a pain of a kind that I have already experienced recurs, I can immediately tell the place from which it proceeds. Still I may make a mistake, if, when my attention is withdrawn from my body and fixed on something else, a gnat should bite me, and apply my hand to my right leg though it was the left that was bitten. Nay even still, if any exciting cause affects the nerves in a way that I never yet experienced, I cannot tell what really ails me. Must not all this be otherwise, if the nerves themselves felt? I see clearly too that I can defy the feeling of moderate pain. In like manner, if I feel pain in one part of my body only, I say: I have a pain here; in other respects nothing ails me. Is it the suffering part that says the one, and the rest of the body the other? There must then absolutely be a something besides the body that feels in the body. To the nerves indeed belongs the

preparation or conveyance of sensations, but to the soul the susceptibility for them.

But do we not talk of happy and unhappy organization? Do we not charge insensibility, stupidity, and idiocy, to a defective organization? Do we not thereby admit that organization is what is called the soul itself, and the body the entire man?

A vast deal no doubt depends on perfection of the organization, the defects of which are not to be compensated by the most excellent education; while, on the other hand, the very happily organized individual frequently achieves great things without any education at all. The organization may be aptly termed the internal school of man. Hence, however, it by no means follows, that it is the soul itself, and that the body is the entire man; on the contrary, this serves rather to confirm the opinion that there must be a particular something in the body, which there feels and thinks. If this something, to which, as I believe, the faculty of feeling and the faculty of thinking essentially belong, is associated with an unhappy organization, it cannot duly cultivate those faculties, and can never learn to feel and think justly; nay, when there are main defects in the organization, the individual may continue for life as if he possessed no thinking faculty. Give him in idea an organization free from defect, and he shall be a shining example of sensibility and wisdom. The organization it is, by means of which the feeling and thinking something feels and thinks. If this has been from the beginning

in a proper state, the something learns to feel and think properly. It is just the same with this internal education as with the external. If good principles are instilled into an individual from his youth, he becomes a good man and performs good actions. But is it afterwards the collection of good principles, the good moral system of instruction itself, that performs the good actions, or is it not the man who performs them by virtue of his principles? Well, in like manner, it is not the happy organization which experiences the just feelings and thinks the just thoughts, but the man, the man properly so called, the I, which feels and thinks them by virtue of the organization.

But do I not see daily instances that persons lose from paralytic affections the faculty of feeling, that a mere fever renders them for a time delirious, that diseases rob them of memory, and that a single blow on the head totally deprives them of understanding for life? How is it here in regard to the particular something which, you say, feels and thinks in the body? Is it not evident that the body is the man?

I should imagine that this objection has been already answered by what goes before. If the organization is the medium through which this something endowed with the faculty of feeling and thinking in the body learns to feel and think, and afterwards continues to feel and think; this something can feel and think justly so long only as that medium is in a proper state for it. Can I see clearly in a fog? If I cannot, does it thence follow that I have lost the

faculty of seeing clearly ? Let the fog disperse, and I shall see as well as ever. If defects of a temporary or permanent nature take place in the organization itself, or in that which is immediately connected with it ; the feeling and thinking something loses, not the faculty of feeling and thinking justly, but it can only no longer use its faculty properly or perhaps at all.

For the rest, the loss of feeling in paralysis is confined to the paralysed parts, and there are instances that when the partial paralysis has remained, the sensibility of the rest of the body has become so much the more perfect ; just as if the feeling something, because it had less to feel, could pay the more attention to the sensations that are left to it. Injuries of the head have frequently been remedied by means of the trepan ; not that the faculty of thinking has been restored by the trepan, but by means of it that instrument by which alone the thinking faculty can manifest its activity has been set to rights. As to the loss of memory by disease, there are extraordinary instances of this, which confirm the existence of a something in the body that possesses also the faculty of memory. One person merely lost the recollection of a certain series of ideas and faithfully retained the remembrance of every thing else. Another became incapable of retaining proper names only. A third could not learn any thing new, but perfectly remembered what he had previously learned. Is it not evident that in these cases it was only the instrument which had in certain respects become unserviceable, but that the faculty of

memory itself was not impaired, because it still manifested itself in other respects the same as before? Were I disposed to attribute this faculty of remembrance to the brain, I must imagine it as being composed of particles, some of which had been destroyed. But is this reasonable? Is it not far more reasonable to infer a something that possesses the faculty of memory, and can no longer exercise it in every case from the defect of the instrument? It would then be just in the same predicament as a letter placed before me, half of which some one covers, so that I cannot read any farther than down to his hand.

But—how is it with *sleep*? Does not this decide that Man is nothing but body?

Neither does that extraordinary state of man, sleep, shake my belief. All the functions which the body performs merely by means of its curious construction continue in sleep; the arbitrary, as they are called, are alone wanting. But the same person who has slept, and, according to the testimony of all who saw him asleep, performed no arbitrary actions, relates on awaking a long dream, in which, as he believes, he performed a hundred arbitrary actions or more. In like manner all real sensations cease in sleep. The dreaming sleeper nevertheless frequently has, in his opinion, numberless at times agreeable, at others disagreeable, sensations. He falls in a dream into the hands of murderers—he acts in a dream the impassioned lover. Who dreams these sensations? Who dreams those arbitrary motions? The organization?

Here arises the question: Do you figure to yourself, in this term, a double organization, a grosser and a finer, or not? If not, and you confine your idea to one, sleep must consist in a relaxation, an unserviceableness, and an inactivity, of the organization. How then can one and the same thing be at once inactive and active? But, if we assume a two-fold organization, and make sleep consist only in a relaxation of the grosser, which is certainly the case; then it is impossible to conceive by what means the finer, which, in a waking state, if there is not a something above it in the body, is set in motion merely by the grosser, may be set in motion in a state of sleep. And thus arbitrary actions and feelings dreamt in sleep would be quite as much out of the question as real ones. But if in addition to the two organizations I assume a superior something, both the dreams and the absence of arbitrary motions and real sensations in sleep are accounted for. The grosser organization is relaxed and unfit to perform its functions; therefore the sensitive something cannot have any real sensations. It can, nevertheless, set the finer in motion, and thereby obtain images of really felt sensations—that is to say, dream. Were it to be urged, that in this case it must, as when awake, be capable of performing arbitrary actions, since it need only, as in waking, set the finer organization in motion for that purpose, which would then communicate its motion as usual to the grosser; this answer follows, that the

grosser, during sleep, is unfit for the reception of this communicated motion.

The state of sleep then, instead of throwing a suspicion upon the existence of a particular something in the body, would perhaps be the very thing, if extremely careful observations were made upon it, to place the matter beyond all doubt. We did not continue, for example, to dream on about that with which we were engaged till the moment of falling asleep. This, however, must have been the case, if the dream had been a mere work of the organization. The dream, on the contrary, is often not only quite unconnected with the events of the last hour, but also with the occurrences of the whole day. It does not always happen that the most vivid impressions, or ideas that were of the highest importance to us, are continued. How often have I meditated most intently on the most serious subject till I have retired to rest, and afterwards dreamt the whole night of nothing but sensible objects ! How often, after listening to music for three or four hours, have I gone straight to bed, and my dream has been of a journey, or a literary discussion !

Neither is every dream a confused medley of images and ideas, such as the mere organization would throw together. I recollect having in a dream written letters and made speeches, which were perfectly coherent and highly elaborated, and which on awaking I could partially recollect. I have spoken with fluency languages, in which I can merely read books. I have

found myself in company with persons whom I only know by name, and whom I have never seen in my life.

It is impossible to account for all these things on the principle of the mere organization. I am compelled therefore to assume a something besides that in the body, which, when the grosser organization is inactive, can operate the more freely on the finer; a something which possesses the power of re-arranging, even altering and recomposing former impressions and images, which the finer organization, being set in motion, again presents; a something that can work up these old impressions and images, till they have the appearance of being absolutely new. To me it is indifferent what this something is called. Whether it be called *soul*, or *mind*, or *I*—according to my conviction, it must exist.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

IF THERE IS A SOUL ATTACHED TO THE BODY,
MUST IT NOT OF NECESSITY PERISH WITH THE
BODY ?

“WELL then,” methinks some one says with a smile, “as I believe in the existence of the body, so, to please you, I will likewise believe in the existence of a soul in union with the body. But, on your part, as you believe in the annihilation of the body, you must also believe in the annihilation of this soul at the same time with the body. As it fares with one so it must absolutely fare with the other. There is no intrinsic possibility that the soul should last longer than the body. With death sensation ceases like respiration, and thought like the circulation of the blood : and as the body is annihilated for ever, so sensation and the faculty of thought are annihilated for ever, like breathing and pulsation.”

If that is the case, if there is no intrinsic possibility of the existence of the soul after the dissolution of the body, there is again an end to my meditations ;

and it must be folly to prosecute my reflections on the *reality* of a future state. It is clear that the internal possibility of a thing is no evidence of its reality; but it is still clearer, that a rational person would not think of the latter without the former.

It is true—I firmly believe, that the soul cannot exist without body. What it is I know not; but that, if it has no body, it cannot belong to any world, that is, cannot inhabit any of the orbs comprised in the system of the universe, and that still less is it capable of feeling and thinking without body, is my unalterable conviction, which is not to be shaken even by the question—What, upon this principle, becomes of God? God is universally acknowledged to be incomprehensible. But do I not myself hereby admit that the soul ceases to feel and think, as soon as the body, or at least its organization, is destroyed? And is not this equivalent to the assertion that the soul itself ceases to exist with the body?

How was that? Here must be some mistake. There it is! when I said, that the soul cannot exist without body, that it cannot feel and think but in a body; I did not assert that the soul cannot exist without *this* body, and that it cannot feel and think but in *this* body.

Even by this I gain nothing. If it were conceivable that the soul could obtain another body, in the strict sense of the expression—but to me that is wholly inconceivable—I am aware that this would be of no benefit. Unless at least the chief element of

this body be left to it, the soul cannot have any consciousness of its identity. It would seem then not as if it were continuing to exist, but as if it were beginning for the first time to exist.

Here an idea occurs to me. My body is incessantly changing. It is constantly losing old particles and receiving new ones by means of food. To-day it is not precisely the same as it was yesterday; and when I compare it with the body which I had twelve years ago, it is certainly, I may say, an entirely new one. In this sense I might assert that it is already the third body which I have at present. If the duration of the soul depended on this gross body, it must also change with the body. *I myself* should therefore be in my third existence. This, however, cannot be; for I perfectly recollect circumstances which occurred ten, twenty years ago, and yet know all that I learned in my whole life. If the *I* changed with the body, it would be obliged to go to school again every twelve years. As this is not necessary, and as the soul, without retaining some of the elementary principle of the former body, could not have the consciousness that it was still the same; the body itself must contain something which is not exposed to its daily vicissitudes. As then this is not exposed to the gradual change, so it need not absolutely be exposed to the ultimate real dissolution of the body, but may become in death the ground-work of a new body. By such an arrangement at least the intrinsic impossibility of the existence of the soul after

death is removed. The soul may be destined to exist after death ; but this does not authorise the inference that such actually is its destination.

A somewhat similar result seems to me to spring from the following observation. I know not only what I saw and heard ten or twenty years ago, notwithstanding the great changes which my body has since undergone ; but, were I this moment to become deaf and blind, I should retain all the ideas of what I had seen and heard up to the present time. The example of all those to whom this misfortune has happened affords evidence of this. They acquire not indeed any new ideas of visible and audible objects, and in like manner they would never have acquired any had they been born blind and deaf ; but those which they have previously received they firmly retain. Do we not in this case clearly discover a certain independence of the finer organization on the grosser ? Must this extend precisely to death and no farther ?

May not sleep, and more especially sound sleep, as it is called, be here once more adduced as an argument in support of the opinion of those, who assign the same lot in death to soul and body ?

I have seen, with my own eyes, a man, who had the character of being so sound a sleeper that nothing could disturb him, taken out of his bed, carried three times round about the house and then replaced. We said nothing to him about the matter, and he consequently rose in the belief that he had not stirred since he lay down. May it not be the same with a dead

person; if he were left lying in bed and could come to life again at the expiration of ten years, would he not then believe that he was recovering? But this example is irrelevant to the present case; for the sleeper in question related to us that he dreamt he was travelling to Constantinople. Thus, while he was being carried about the house he imagined that he was performing a journey; and it is still a question whether this dream was not actually occasioned by his being really carried about.

But I am acquainted with still more striking facts. The present clerk of my parish once fell asleep at the conclusion of the last verse but one of the hymn sung just before the sermon. After sleeping a good half-hour, he awoke before the sermon was over, and immediately began singing the last verse of the hymn.—My last steward was seated at his table writing a letter to me, when an apoplexy instantaneously put an end to his life.—Must I not consider both as being in the same predicament; and would not the steward, were he to come to life again a hundred years hence, continue writing where he left off when surprised by death;—just as the clerk began to sing again where he had ceased on falling asleep?—How often it has happened to myself in winter nights, that, after retiring to rest about half past eleven, I have on awaking heard the clock strike three quarters, and imagined that I had been in bed but a quarter of an hour; yet on looking at my watch I have found that it wanted a quarter of six. How, if this were really an image of the state of death,

and if sleep and death differed not only like *less* and *more*, but like *shorter* and *longer*? Was it not for this reason that the ancients denominated death the everlasting sleep?

It is true when I look at a person sleeping soundly and a corpse, at a little distance, they both appear alike. But must two things which appear alike necessarily be alike? I recollect well what pains my old tutor used to take to prove that the curious architecture of the beaver, though bearing externally a great resemblance to that of Man, is nevertheless *in itself* totally different, inasmuch as Man is governed in his operations by reason, but the beaver only by something that is the shadow of reason. If it could be proved, from a comparison of sleep with death, that death is a suspension of the thinking faculty for ever, then sleep must be a suspension of the thinking faculty for a time. It is manifest that sleep is not so, and thus we compare things which are not to be compared. The sleeper dreams; he who sleeps the soundest frequently dreams in the strictest sense of the word; that is, he connects together mere lively images of his fancy, over which the external world has not the slightest influence: whereas he who sleeps lightly receives feeble impressions of what is passing around him with any degree of vehemence, and introduces them into his dreams. Nay, we have evidences that certain states of the body have an influence upon the dreams of even the soundest sleeper; and, on the other hand, that certain dreams affect the body. How often the

delighted dreamer laughs in the soundest sleep! How his heart throbs, how rapidly his pulse beats, when he finds himself in the hands of robbers, or in a violent storm at sea! How the tears roll down his cheeks when he beholds in a dream the object of his affection struggling with death! And, what shall we say to it, that the sleeper in the midst of the most terrific dream reminds himself that it is but a dream, and thereby puts an end at once to his imaginary sufferings? This circumstance has frequently happened to myself.

Taking all this together, I cannot perceive how any thing can be inferred from the state of sleep in favour of the opinion that the dissolution of the soul must be necessarily connected with the dissolution of the body. The sleeper continues to think—he dreams. No doubt every one dreams when he sleeps, and if every one cannot tell *whether* and *what* he dreamt, that is by no means a proof of the contrary. As we frequently remember the whole of our dream in the first hour after waking, and in the second have entirely forgotten it, so also we may forget it immediately on awaking. This depends solely on the greater or less importance of the dream. How would it otherwise happen that we are sometimes reminded, perhaps in the middle of the day, by something similar that occurs, of a dream of the preceding night; though during the whole forenoon we did not know that we had dreamt?

As to the old clerk who fell asleep in the church, and began singing lustily in the middle of the sermon,

to the no small amusement of the whole congregation, he made the following excuse to the rector, who took him severely to task for the interruption. It seemed all at once, he said, as if he could not find the third verse of the hymn—that is, he fell asleep;—he was exceedingly troubled on this account, and kept singing the hymn over again from the beginning—that is, he dreamt so;—at length he found the third verse and continued singing—that is, he awoke. Without this account the matter might in my opinion be very easily explained. His finding himself when he awoke in the same place and in the presence of the congregation was the principal point. Had his place been meanwhile changed; had he been carried home and put to bed, he would certainly not have gone on singing the third verse when he awoke. In fact, the last sensible impression he had was that he had finished the second verse; and as on awaking he beheld before him the same congregation, the last sensible impression which he had was also awakened in him, and knowing that a verse was yet wanting, he immediately began it in his anxiety.—But it does not thence follow that the steward must absolutely be in the same predicament. The latter may certainly have finally ceased to exist when he died, and if this is the case and he could ever, in the strict sense of the term, come to life again, he would certainly do like the clerk and go on writing, for then the last sensible impression which he had of writing would be revived in him. But should merely his grosser organization have been destroyed

by death, and he now be connected by his finer with a finer sensible world ; he would, were he to return to this grosser sensible world, know full well, from the series of more recent sensible impressions which he has experienced, that it is a long time since he began to write the letter to me, and that of course it would be quite unnecessary for him to finish it.

As to my own mistake in regard to the time I had been in bed, it proves nothing more than that I had not meanwhile measured time. My notion that I had slept but a quarter of an hour proceeded from the accidental circumstance, that the first thing I heard on awaking was the clock striking three quarters. But for this, I should have supposed that I had only just fallen asleep. In short, I had even then been dreaming, and was prevented only by the unserviceableness of my grosser organization from observing the changes and events succeeding one another in the external world. In this however consists the whole idea of *time*. Should now the finer organization be capable of subsisting in death without the grosser, I might be able to notice by means of it the events and changes succeeding each other in a finer external world, and consequently to measure time, as at present. Of course no inference in regard to death could be drawn from sleep. In sleep the finer organization does not come into immediate contact with the external world, because the grosser forms a kind of partition between it and the world. The dreamer has no conceptions of time and place, nor can he have any. In dreaming,

therefore, we blend together earlier and later occurrences, and are one moment at home and the next a hundred miles off.

Sleep seems then in no case whatever to prove the intrinsic impossibility of the existence of the soul after death, or the opinion that the soul must perish at the same time with the body. I see that the finer organization continues to operate when the grosser is wholly inoperative. Should any one reply that this may well be the case now, because the grosser organization is supported by aliments, and in like manner the finer by the grosser, and as the conservation of the former cannot be conceived as possible without the conservation of the latter : so also it is not yet demonstrated that the finer cannot possibly be supported but by the grosser. At present to be sure it must, as it is yet enveloped by the grosser ; but does it thence follow that, if it were next to the external world as the grosser at present is, it might not receive its support from the external world just as well as the latter ? As yet indeed it is only the most subtle particles of the aliments that fall to its share. Are then these particles to be sought in the alimentary substances alone ? or may they not be diffused throughout the universe ? and may they not, without being conveyed to it precisely through the alimentary substances, reach it in ten other ways which may still be unknown to us ?

But here I am met by a consideration, which seems at the first blush to furnish irrefragable evidence that

the soul experiences in death the same fate as the body.

Did the soul exist before the body? or did it begin to exist at the same time with the body? If the former were the case, I would ask—what it had been previously, where it had been, how long, &c.? I am myself of opinion that the soul cannot exist without body; of course all these questions are superfluous, and upon my own principle it follows, that it first began to exist with the body or perhaps not till after the body. Would it not thence necessarily follow, that as it began to exist with the body so it must also cease to exist with the body? A question of the last importance, I allow.

The whole history of the human mind favours this opinion, and experience seems manifestly to confirm it. What is the new-born infant? Is it *much* better than a mere lump of flesh? Is it in the least superior to a human sensitive plant? And though it is said by its cries immediately after its birth to express the pain occasioned by the unwonted sensation of breathing: still we must assume a period at which it first began to feel in the womb—and the state of the infant there must be much the same as that of the chick in the egg, which has been most minutely observed. By and by we see that the child begins by degrees to notice the things around it. In time it learns to distinguish external objects. As it grows older we perceive that it forms ideas of them, and perfects these ideas more and more. It is now a boy and manifests a desire of

knowledge. His understanding gradually expands. He becomes a youth and gains the commendations of his teachers. He is full of fire and spirit, because his body is approaching maturity. He arrives at manhood, and now that his body is completely developed his mind too has attained its highest powers. Is it not evident that, in the same proportion as his body grows and acquires vigour, his soul too grows and acquires vigour? Nay does not the development of the latter depend on the developement of the former?

At this its height of perfection the body does not long continue stationary, but its powers begin gradually to decline as they before advanced. And what more do I see? Why, that the soul declines also in the same ratio as the body becomes infirm. The fire which animated the actions of the individual subsides; the vivacity of his feelings diminishes; the memory will not receive fresh accessions of knowledge, nay the desire of it is extinct. The old man becomes dull in head and heart, and is again like the body that he was at first. In very advanced age he becomes a second time a child, and is once more amused with toys and trifles. His infirmities increase; with the last powers of body he loses also the last remains of the powers of his mind, and henceforward he vegetates like a plant. The stoppage of the corporeal machine is at hand. The soul is now nothing more than life. Life changes to death. - - - Is it not clear as the sun at noon-day that the soul, which began to exist with

the body, was gradually developed with the body, and progressively declined with the body, also perishes entirely with the complete dissolution of the body?

What feeling is this that comes over me! Can I find any thing to oppose to the convincing cogency of this argument? I know not. So then it would be one and the same thing whether the organization were the I, or whether the I were a peculiar something distinct from the organization. In the former case I should perish in death merely as organization; in the latter I should perish as a peculiar something together with the organization. Perish I must at all events!

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING.

THE picture of the human mind which I yesterday delineated is by no means a faithful portraiture of it *in general*. The first half, which relates to the development of the soul in the same ratio as the body is developed, may be correct; for precocious children, if we do not trust entirely to report, but closely observe them with our own eyes, are after all only children. But the latter half, which represents the decline of the soul as keeping pace with the decline of the body, and which seemed to argue the entire dissolution of the soul with the dissolution of the body, has far too many exceptions to admit any incontrovertible argument to be deduced from it.

I have myself known several old men of eighty years and upwards, whose minds seemed, as it were, to defy the decay of the body. The phenomena enumerated above were not exhibited by them, and their minds continued to the last to display as much activity and vigour as ever in all those occupations and

labours for which great bodily powers were not required. I shall never forget a certain public functionary of the first rank, who served his country for half a century with the most exemplary zeal and fidelity. It was not till his eighty-fifth year that he resigned his seat at the board where he had presided, not on account of any decline of his mental powers, but because his sight and hearing began to be impaired. It was only half a year before his death that he finally resigned his appointment, by no means from inability to reflect and decide, but merely that he might appropriate to himself the close of a long life devoted to the public service, and prepare, as he said, for the great change of worlds. He was the father of a large family, and numbered sixty grand-children and great-grand-children. He celebrated his last birth-day with genuine piety, assembled around him all his descendants, gave them like Jacob his last blessing, and delivered a short but sound and affecting extempore address, which will endear his memory to them for ever. He survived a fortnight, during which he took no other sustenance than a little biscuit and wine. His weakness increased daily, so that at last his attendants were obliged to move his hands from one place to another. He had already lost his sight, and on the last day his hearing also entirely forsook him. He fixed very accurately the day and hour of his decease. "Now I am going," said he; pronounced a short but most pertinent and pious prayer from his heart, and with the Amen, gently expired.

These circumstances, which are well known to all ranks and classes in the country where they happened, cannot but excite my highest interest. On the same ground that opposite circumstances are thought to furnish evidence that the soul perishes together with the body, may this instance be considered as demonstrating that the soul continues to exist notwithstanding the decline and dissolution of the body. Neither are such instances of persons retaining their mental energies in full vigour in advanced age by any means rare ; only they pass unnoticed, except in their own houses, unless they have been eminent public characters. The utmost that becomes generally known respecting them is, that they retained their faculties to the last, and spoke a few moments before they expired. It were to be wished that circumstances of this kind were more carefully observed and recorded.

In my opinion the cases of persons who die of old age, and those who die of consumption in early or middle life, are absolutely alike. In both we witness a gradual and complete decay of the body. Now, it is very common for the latter to retain their mental faculties to the last moment, so that we perceive in them not only no proportionate decay, but no decay whatever. On the contrary, it very often happens that the weaker the body the more vigorous the mind becomes ; as we frequently find that the most ailing persons are the greatest geniuses.

I had once a very dear friend, who was literally starved to death, owing to an obstruction of the upper

orifice of the stomach. During the last four weeks of his life he could not take the least sustenance. It is not to be expressed what energy of mind this man displayed throughout his lingering illness, and how it increased every day, so as to be truly wonderful at last, when his whole body was already quite cold. He was a fortnight in dying. At the same time he made the minutest observations on himself, and could always describe to the physicians to a hair's breadth what progress death had made since their preceding visit. He left a wife and six children; and never can I recollect without deep emotion with what fortitude he strove to console them for his early decease, and how much more soothing was the comfort he administered, the nearer the day approached on which they were to lose him. "Now my hands and my feet are dead"—"Now death has advanced to my knees and my elbows"—"Now all is dead as far as my shoulders and my hips"—Such were the accounts that he gave me when I called to see him. At the same time he would converse on the most important concerns of man and on domestic matters with the same interest, the same soundness of judgment, and the same consistency, as in the days of his best health. "Now my ears too are dead and you must speak to me by signs," said he, the day before he expired. On the last, when I went to him, he articulated with some difficulty: "My sight has been gone since midnight. Then the lamp went out—but only for me. Death is already seizing my tongue. Leave me alone for a few moments, that I

may once more make a truly worthy use of it. Then come back and put my hands in one another; I will die praying, and as a sign that I am dying, I will open my closed eyes—that is, if I can. I should like to turn them in death towards heaven, though I can no longer see it with them.”—We left him and he prayed, as far as we could understand what he said, so affectingly, that we all fell on our knees and joined with fervent devotion in his aspirations. When we returned to him, he smiled with closed eyes, from which we concluded that he had by this time lost the use of his tongue. I placed his hands as he had desired. A solemn silence ensued, and every one watched for the promised opening of his eyes; but he was not able to give the sign. A tremulous motion only was observed in the eyelids, accompanied with a still more heavenly smile. It was as though I read at this moment in his countenance the last blessing for his family and the last thought of God. His head sunk and—he was no more!

Circumstances of this kind, attending the death both of aged and of young persons who retain their mental faculties unimpaired till the last, must obviously invalidate the evidence in favour of the total dissolution of the mind with the total dissolution of the body, deduced from the death of others, in whom a proportionate decay of mind with that of the body is conceived to be discoverable. In the former this proportionate decay of the mind does not in reality take place, but rather the contrary.

Supposing, however, that all who die without distinction exhibited one and the same spectacle of a proportionate decay of mind and body; still, on farther consideration, I cannot think that the necessity of the total dissolution of the mind with the total dissolution of the body would thence absolutely follow. The decay of the body is something real; but the decay of the mind might perhaps be merely something apparent. It might perhaps only seem to us as if the mental faculties declined, because we see them act with less and less vigour. But the decline of their expression, consequent on the decline of the proper quality of both organizations, would not be a decline of themselves. In old age the feelings are said to be blunted. Does this mean, that the aged lose the faculty of feeling itself?—or does it not rather signify that their grosser organization is gradually losing its proper tone? It is likewise asserted that the aged are dull of thought. Must this mean, that they lose the thinking faculty?—or may it not also signify, that their finer organization is gradually becoming more imperfect? It seems to me to be a parallel case with that of a first-rate musician who is required to play on a bad instrument. Woe betide him if a judgment is thence formed of his abilities! But take only an ordinary player and set him down to a piano-forte, half the strings of which are broken and the other half out of tune—

The question here would be merely this:—whether, in like manner as the finer organization would become

more imperfect in the same proportion as the grosser becomes so, the finer must of necessity be totally destroyed when the grosser is totally destroyed, and what in this case would become of the mind, the existence of which without *any* organization is not to be conceived?

To this I might reply :—*Now*, that the grosser organization envelopes the finer, the latter certainly is dependent on the former, and cannot be invigorated, nourished, and supported, by any thing but that : but how would it be, if the finer itself were the nearest to the external world as the grosser is at present? Might it not then receive its support and nourishment from the external world, just in the same manner as the grosser now derives support from it? In this case, if it were to derive support immediately from the external world, instead of receiving it as at present through the medium of the grosser, and being obliged to take it, however bad it may be, just as it is furnished by the latter, would it not, when released from the grosser, take it immediately in the highest perfection? What a glorious prospect would then await every individual in death! Thus the moment when the thinking power would seem to be totally extinct, would be closely followed by that when this power would re-appear perfect, nay perhaps more perfect than ever.

It might here be alleged, that this bold opinion is overthrown by the examples of the aged and of those who die of consumption, which I have myself adduced.

Whence, it might be asked, in these the continued perfect state of the finer organization amid the most lamentable decay of the grosser, if the finer cannot at present be supported but by the grosser? With them the finer was not yet nearest to the external world.

Perhaps, however, even this question may be answered; perhaps the answer may lead to ideas which are of importance to the whole human race, and which trench deeply into the heart of moral philosophy. Be it, and be it called, what it will, that conveys the grosser organization to the finer, and as it were filters and deposits for it, and that keeps the latter in a proper state: would it involve an intrinsic contradiction, were we to assume that, if this nutriment, which has been duly supplied for a period of thirty or of sixty years, has been meanwhile husbanded with proper economy, a kind of provision might be formed which would suffice to keep the finer organization in a good state for a considerable time, though the grosser should contribute little, and indeed next to nothing, towards it? Does not experience seem to tally with this notion? How is it that sometimes persons of the age of eighty or ninety years, who have all along displayed astonishing powers of mind, suddenly lose their energies, their judgment, their memory, nay the very faculty of thought, although no great, at least no perceptible deterioration has taken place in their outward state, to occasion this change? May not their well-husbanded store be all at once exhausted?

If there is nothing unreasonable in this idea, what

is there to forbid my entertaining it? Wherein then would consist the art of husbanding such an invaluable provision? Or, on the other hand, what is it that steals and squanders this provision of the soul against old age? Unquestionably this robber, this prodigal is—*sensuality*. That this affects the finer organization far more than the grosser, is attested by nine out of ten instances of its votaries who have degraded themselves beneath the level of brutes. Are not these almost invariably distinguished by the want of understanding, of judgment, of resolution, of presence of mind, nay even of memory, and of still humbler moral powers? In such persons does not the body frequently continue to retain for a long time all its plumpness, all its muscle and fat? Nay, are there not voluptuaries who increase in bulk in the same proportion as they become more stupid and brutal? And if moreover the public and private history of the lives of our old men daily proves, that those who lived temperately in youth and middle age retain a sound understanding to the last, while such of them as have been debauchees sink into a long second childhood—how can I still doubt the accuracy of my opinion?

O men, men! it is your doom once to die, and ye cannot avoid it; but ye are not doomed of necessity to a second childhood! That ye may avoid, if ye will; and ought not all your efforts throughout your whole lives to tend to this point? Is there then either honour or pleasure in merely living to be old? or do not all the pleasure and all the honour consist in

living according to reason? Amid the grossest debaucheries ye may indeed attain old age; for strong constitutions become in time inured to any thing: but what kind of old age will it be? For a long time a mere *animal* life; and in the end an absolutely *vegetable life*. Spare your finer organization; husband the provision for its sustenance; and whenever ye are tempted to waste it irrationally, hold up to yourselves the deplorable, nay contemptible and ludicrous picture ye shall present, twenty or perhaps fifty years hence!

Should man continue to exist after death, it is very possible that those who, through sensuality, have made dreadful ravages in their finer organization, may exhibit traces of it in the other world—traces that may long remain perceptible, or even perhaps never be erased. What a copious source of arguments against the unbridled indulgence of the passions the moralist may find in this conjecture, does not come within the scope of my present meditations.

In short, I have convinced myself, that the ordinary notion of the decay of the mind with the decay of the body does not invalidate the possibility of the continued existence of the mind, notwithstanding the final and complete dissolution of the body. *It is in no case absolutely necessary that the soul must perish together with the body.* I will therefore cheerfully prosecute my meditations, and review all the arguments I am acquainted with, by which men of universally acknowledged excellence have endeavoured

to convince themselves and others of a future state. At the same time I will conscientiously weigh all that has been said by equally virtuous men, or that may be advanced, on the other side of the question. Whatever be the result—something or nothing—I must be content.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

FIRST ARGUMENT OF REASON IN BEHALF OF A
FUTURE STATE.

THE earth which we inhabit is at the same time the abode of numerous, of yet unnumbered, nay perhaps of innumerable species of animated beings. It is evident, from the most superficial observation, that it was designed to be so—or, wherefore in its hollows such immense reservoirs of water?—wherefore the manifold diversity in the form of the heights that project above the surface of the deep?—wherefore the inexpressible variety in the vegetable kingdom, of which but a very small portion is subservient to the support of Man? It was manifestly intended that the largest possible mass of life should exist on the earth. If we farther consider, that there is no animal of any kind which is not preyed upon by others, we shall be still more thoroughly convinced of the truth of this position. Thus, the future food itself was destined to have animation, that, till it was required

for food, it might contribute to augment the quantity of life.

For every species of living beings upon the earth suitable enjoyments are provided. None of them has been denied its share, but to none have so many been allotted as to Man. To him, indeed, belongs by right the largest portion; for not only is he susceptible of more pleasures than his fellow-beings, but he is also more deserving of them, because he alone transforms the earth into one vast garden; for, without his care a few favoured spots only would present that appearance.

Since, according to this arrangement, the happiness of the other animated beings must exist at the same time with that of Man, his felicity for that very reason cannot be complete; it cannot be undisturbed and unalloyed with pain. Many of the incidents in nature which tend to their benefit are prejudicial to him, because their constitution and economy are essentially different from his:—nay it is solely to the mischief they do him that many of them owe their preservation and enjoyments. Sorrow, therefore, is inseparable from the life of Man.

His own nature furnishes the second proof of this so disagreeable position. The same moral and physical constitution which renders him susceptible of such a multitude of pleasures, is also the source of endless mortifications. His body is indeed most ingeniously constructed, but for this very reason its machinery is most liable to be deranged. The circle

of his possessions is indeed the most extensive ; but as these possessions are all subject to uncertainty, vicissitude, and change, he is consequently exposed to the most losses and dangers. His understanding, it is true, qualifies him exclusively for the feeling of the sublime and beautiful, for the relish of what is excellent and perfect ; but it likewise forces upon him the most painful impressions, produced by the disorder, vice, and wickedness, which present themselves to his view. His inward sympathy, as it were, multiplies his existence, and enables him, happy in himself, to participate in the happiness of others ; but it also makes their misfortunes his own, and thus embitters or perhaps wholly extinguishes the grateful sensation of his individual felicity. Hence sorrow is inseparable from the life of Man.

Human society in which he is placed affords the third proof of the truth of this assertion. Man must dwell among his kind, if he would be truly man. Society alone cultivates his exalted faculties—and what bliss is it for him to live among the wise and the virtuous, to enjoy the happiness of their friendship, and in conjunction with them to accomplish much more good than he could have performed alone ! All men, however, are not wise and virtuous. Thus he grows weary of living among fools from whom social relations will not permit him to extricate himself ; and he shudders at the sight of the wicked which he cannot wholly avoid. Envy and hatred pursue him, because he cannot gratify all, or perhaps because he

possesses advantages superior to many. To-day he clasps, as he believes, a friend to his bosom, and loads him with kindness—to-morrow he is repaid for it with the foulest ingratitude. He sets on foot some important plan for the public benefit, under the idea that he cannot fail to receive universal support; and all combine to obstruct his operations. He is calumniated, neglected, forgotten. His interests clash with the interests of ten others; he is consequently involved in endless quarrels and contention. He has to suffer as a part for the whole, and feels it necessary to make sacrifices, at one time for truth which is obnoxious to his contemporaries; at another for innocence in order to rescue it from oppression, or for justice which is in danger of being trampled under foot—now for his country, now for his family. In the bosom of the latter he hopes to find a solace for all the injuries which he sustains from society; but alas! the objects of his fondest affection indemnify him not—his wife perhaps proves faithless or his children degenerate. Sorrow therefore is inseparable from the life of Man.

Though Man feels the heavy burden which oppresses him and sighs on account of it, yet he sighs by no means so much and so loudly as might be expected. How is this to be accounted for? How happens it that we see so many unfortunate persons, who, when the first shock communicated by their losses is past, speedily recover themselves, apparently forget their calamities, and manifest even in the midst of them

unruffled cheerfulness and tranquillity? Whence is it that we see many whose sufferings extort our pity scarcely heave a sigh or breathe a murmur, but display a fortitude that is truly extraordinary?

It is certainly not the idea that their condition is unalterable which produces this effect. That idea could but serve at best eventually to harden the sufferer; yet it is not obduracy that we discover in these unfortunates, but serenity. Now, serenity springs not from fear of the immutability of an unhappy situation, but from hope that this situation will change, from the confident belief in a better futurity. In this hope, in this belief, lies in fact the source of the composure of the majority of the afflicted. They know from experience that not prosperity alone, but adversity also is subject to vicissitude; that not only do bad times follow good, but good again succeed bad; and that as there are losses, so also are there compensations for losses. The husbandman whose crops are destroyed by storms shudders at the first sight of his devastated fields; but imagination soon transports him into the coming year, when his land, superabundantly fertilized by the wreck occasioned by his present misfortune, will yield a double or even triple crop. The wretch whose house is consumed by fire wrings his hands in agony when he hears the crackling of the flames; but it is not long before he begins to think that with the assistance of the benevolent he may build himself a better. He who has been cheated or robbed is at first incensed against

the villains who could use him so cruelly; but at length he consoles himself with the reflection that in time he may retrieve his loss. The persecuted man hopes to find means to conciliate his enemies; the object of envy conceives that he shall disarm those by whom he is envied, if he allows them to participate in his advantages; he who is unjustly condemned doubts not that his innocence will yet be made manifest; the wounded know that wounds will heal again; the sick, trusting to the skill of the physician and the efficacy of medicine, look forward to their recovery; the poor in time of dearth expect relief from a plentiful season; a whole nation, suffering under a profligate minister, cherish a confident assurance that their prince, moved by their complaints, will at length drive their oppressor from his presence; half a hemisphere, desolated by war, anticipates the return of prosperity with peace, knowing that wars too must have a termination. Thus, thousands and tens of thousands of sufferers soothe themselves solely with the hope of a favourable change in their untoward circumstances.

When this hope is wanting, some other consolation supplies its place to the afflicted; so that, in every evil, of what nature soever it be, there is always something which diminishes its unpleasant impressions and gradually restores tranquillity to the mind of the sufferer. Wherever there is nothing but unmerited misfortune, there too is consolation, and the consolation frequently arises out of the misfortune

itself. The dwarf receives money for the exhibition of his diminutive person; the valetudinarian finds some specific or other to afford him relief; the persecuted man is patronized by the enemies of his persecutors; the patriot, whose services to his country are repaid with ingratitude, emigrates from it and in a foreign land acquires higher distinctions; the recluse attaches himself to the pleasures of nature or to books; the schemer who has failed in one plan projects another. The afflicted also understand the art of deriving some sort of profit from their misfortunes, and the very nature of those misfortunes assists them to do so; for there is no loss imaginable from which there does not immediately result some gain of a different kind, though perhaps not of equal magnitude.

If the sufferer possesses truly virtuous principles, he soon perceives that he may be rendered much wiser and better by his misfortunes. This, according to his view of things, is the greatest of all possible gains. Whether he attains this end by means of prosperity or of adversity is to him a matter of perfect indifference, so he does but attain it: nay, he is soon convinced that it is to be attained with greater certainty by means of the latter than of the former. The more he feels conscious of his improvement in wisdom and virtue through his misfortune, with the greater fortitude he endures that misfortune. In short as the most pleasures are prepared for Man upon

earth, so are the most consolations likewise provided for him under affliction.

So far then there is harmony and consistency in all the arrangements which have been made in his behalf. But how if he had no hope of a future state? Where-withal could he then console himself on account of death? What! for all his other evils, nay even for imaginary ones, shall he have some comfort; but for the greatest, the most essential, the evil of evils, shall he have no consolation?—none whatever?

In this case he would in fact be destitute of all consolation. The idea that things are not to be altered—that cheerless comfort, cannot soothe the human heart under a misfortune of any consequence, much less under the most severe that can possibly befall him; and from all those sources whence, as we have seen, Man frequently derives tranquillity and content, not one ray of consolation is to be extracted by him in regard to death.

You have heard, for example, that the majority of sufferers, when overtaken by affliction, pacify themselves with the idea that as it came so it will go again; just in the same manner as while the storm only yet lowers, they hope that it will not break. Hope is their cordial, their consolation. Now let us apply this principle to death—what have they to hope on that score?—That it will never arrive?—You cannot suppress a smile; but you will no doubt recover all your gravity when I ask:—If there is no future

state what is left for Man in regard to death but absolute despair ?

You have farther heard that, in every other affliction which admits not of hope, there is at least something at hand that diminishes the melancholy impressions which it produces ; and that this is more especially the case in unmerited misfortunes. Now search the whole world and you will not find any thing to diminish the most melancholy of all impressions—that of death—death equally inevitable and unmerited. Where could you expect to find it ? In your thoughts ? The thought of death is the strongest of any and chases away every other.—In your amusements ? You would then resemble an idiot dancing about on one leg beneath a roof that threatens every moment to fall in and crush him.—In your possessions and your wealth ? The more of these you enjoy, the more inconsolable you will be under the necessity of parting from them.—In the arms of those you love ? Believe me if there is no future existence, no meeting again beyond the grave, no where will the thought of death agonize your heart more cruelly than in their embraces.

You have lastly heard that virtuous sufferers know not any greater gain than the being rendered wiser and better, and that if they bear their afflictions with extraordinary fortitude, it is chiefly because from these they expect to derive that gain with the greatest certainty. Tell me now, is it possible that Man can comfort himself in regard to death with the reflection that by means of it he shall become perfectly wise,

perfectly virtuous?—If you think so, you admit a future state after death. If, on the contrary, you will not admit a future state, this consolation, which has such efficacy for the virtuous sufferer under affliction, falls to the ground; it is denied him in death—nay, not only in death, the last and the greatest of evils, but in every other evil which may previously befall him. In this case it is no gain for him to become wiser and better. For what purpose should he become so? That death might at last find so much the more wisdom and virtue to destroy?

The only conclusion therefore that can hence be drawn is this :—As there is consolation for Man under every affliction, so there must likewise be consolation for him in regard to the greatest of all afflictions—death. And as he cannot have any other consolation for death than that which a future state affords, there must be a future state.

NINTH MEDITATION.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRECEDING.

Is it really the case, that for every evil which afflicts humanity there is always something at hand to lighten its weight? What is there to comfort him who has lost his sight for ever?—what to reconcile the cripple to his condition?—what to pacify the female disfigured by the small-pox? What is there to alleviate the sufferings of one who is subject to the daily attack of an incurable epilepsy; or of him who is continually haunted by some gloomy idea; or of a third doomed to perpetual confinement in a subterranean dungeon? Whence too proceed all those loud and incessant complaints which we are constantly hearing, and which are all proofs that the earth is not such a land of consolation as you would fain represent it?

This objection may be answered as follows: The blind man substitutes the senses of hearing and touch for his lost sight, and cultivates the latter in particular. The cripple trusts to the aid of the strong and

hearty around him. The female, despoiled of her charms by a cruel disease, contrives to win esteem by the qualities of the head and heart. The person afflicted with epilepsy makes himself acquainted with the prognostics of its paroxysms. The hypochondriac dispels by travel the phantoms which torment him; and the prisoner in his dungeon, if suffering wrongfully, may still flatter himself with *hope*—with the hope that his innocence will yet be made manifest and procure his liberation. In time too every sufferer becomes familiarized with his melancholy situation, which habit tends materially to alleviate.

As to the incessant complaints of many sufferers, adduced above, these may certainly be admitted as evidence that they are not comforted: but does it thence follow that there is no consolation for them? A hungry man, surrounded by ever so great an abundance of good cheer, cannot satisfy the cravings of appetite unless he falls to. If he obstinately refuses to eat, because some particular dish which he likes is not there; or if he desires not to be hungry at all—who can help him? It is certainly requisite that there should be a mind disposed to be comforted; a mind, which, when its afflictions are not to be removed, gratefully accepts the means of alleviation that present themselves; a mind which prescribes not to circumstances what means shall be offered to it; a mind which by reflection improves these means, or devises them when it does not find them in readiness. Many sufferers unfortunately are not possessed of *such*

a mind. From a natural vehemence which they have strengthened by their former way of life, from pride, and from being accustomed to a better lot, they require what is impossible, namely, the cessation of their afflictions. They are not satisfied with that which alone is possible—alleviation of their sufferings, and thus ungratefully spurn from them or overlook the means of mitigating them. Others there are who will not give themselves the least trouble about the matter, but desire that these means should drop into their lap, or even be forced upon them. Others again try the means, but if the first experiment fails to produce the expected alleviation, they relinquish them in despair. It is their own fault then if all these lament the want of consolation; and I consider it, for my part, as incontestably true, that whenever Nature or the combination of circumstances imposes an evil upon us, there is always something at hand to alleviate, to soften, and to assist us to bear it. Nay, I would venture to defy any one to mention an instance of such a kind as to prove the contrary, for in so important an investigation mere assertion or denial is not sufficient.

If this is really the case, then there arises the question, whether there needs any consolation *for death*, and whether we have reason to complain of the total want of consolation on account of it. That death itself is not an evil, and still less the greatest of evils, is self-evident. He who no longer exists needs no comfort, no alleviation of the afflictions of

non-existence, which are but phantoms of the imagination. It must therefore be merely the *idea of death* for which people need consolation.

Now this idea does not occur so often to men as might be supposed. A certain happy levity causes them always to view death as at a great distance, and hence they think of it but very indistinctly. We might almost affirm, that a person sound in mind and body is obliged to call up purposely the idea of death, if he wishes it to come; and that it never obtrudes itself against his will, unless perhaps at the sight of a corpse, and not always even then. A grave-digger, or an undertaker, for example, witnesses ten funerals perhaps, without thinking once of his own death. If this were not the case, the whole intercourse of society would be different from what it is: for none can be so silly as to believe, that all those who are continually gay and jovial are rendered so by the hope of a future state. Most of them, on the contrary, doubt the existence of such a state, or at least have not carried their belief in it to any degree of stability. The truth is, they never think of death at all. May not then the distance at which the idea of death keeps itself back, so that to many it does not occur for a year together, contribute greatly to its alleviation as an evil?

Nay more. As the idea of death seldom comes unbidden, it is in the power of a man to banish it from him again as soon as it approaches. He may exchange for instance the sight of a corpse for that of a

jovial circle. Diversion, whether by business or pleasure, is in general a sure antidote to the thought of death. The soul, as soon as it seizes a new idea with ardour, abandons that by which it was just before occupied. Thoughts of business and pleasure are not only the most suitable means for exciting this ardour, but also the most complete specific against the thoughts of death ; so that whenever the former arise the latter are obliged to give way. Why then, it might justly be asked, do ye encourage the thoughts of death ? Why do ye summon them ?—Call them not. Scare them away whenever they obtrude themselves and are troublesome to you !—If then the idea of death comes but rarely ; if even when it comes unbidden it can be driven away whenever we please ; what more need men to tranquillize them in regard to death ? And if they are still uneasy on account of it, 'tis their own fault, just as much as it is their fault when they will not accept the means of alleviating other afflictions which are placed within their reach. *You must die some time or other*—if this distresses you, drive all thoughts of death from your mind.

And finally, is it not absolute cowardice to be afraid of death ? What ! can the idea that you shall once cease to exist shake you thus ? Are you then shocked by the idea that there was once a time when you had not begun to exist ? Is it then so painful to think that you shall some time or other lose all you possess ? You lose nothing, but all things lose you. What need you more when you are yourself no more ?

Can you not enjoy all you have as long as you do exist? Enjoy yourself then! Enjoy yourself amidst the thoughts of death, and consider every enjoyment as a compensation and solace for death.

I cannot deny that there is a great deal of truth in this representation; though I do not believe the assertion, that the thought of death occurs but rarely, to hold good in regard to the more noble and cultivated portion of our species. To our artisans, to those who earn their daily bread by hard labour, and to our boon companions, as they are called, whose lives are an incessant round of dissipation, in short, to all those who are wholly absorbed in the occupations and pleasures of sense, it applies, I admit. But whoever reflects at all, and he in particular who is fond of reflecting on mankind, must wind up almost every series of his meditations with death. We must therefore not think, and least of all on ourselves, if we would avoid this danger—a plan which would be wholly beneath the dignity of Man, and which of course could not conduct him into the right track. Every being cultivates itself in its peculiar way; Man too must cultivate himself. It is his duty more especially to cultivate that which particularly constitutes humanity—his reason. Now the more this is cultivated, the oftener will death stand unbidden before him. The comfort, therefore, which is derived from the *rarity* of involuntary recollections of death, is wholly inapplicable to those who are really and truly men, to the *men of men*.

Still less suitable to their case is the comfort de-

duced from the facility of scaring away the idea of death. To profit by this facility they would be obliged, whenever that idea approached, to break off their meditations and enquiries concerning the world, human nature, and human life. You would have them flee immediately from their solitudes ; but whither ? To Nature perhaps ?—There they would fare no better. The whole series of their reflections, which they had suspended, would recur to their minds, extend itself much farther, and introduce from a thousand sides the idea of the final fate of man. It would be attached for them to every convulsion of Nature, whether great or small ; to every relic of ancient human habitations ; to every hill the summit of which bespeaks the ravages of time, to every oak beginning to decay, to every ear of corn which ripens before their eyes, to every flower which fades at their feet. The view of the country from every height would not fail to suggest the idea, that thousands of years ago human beings enjoyed themselves on the very same spot ; and to the sun they would say : “ Just as genially and benignly didst thou once shine on our forefathers, whose very dust has long since been dispersed by the winds of heaven.” No, to Nature they must not betake themselves for the purpose of banishing the idea of death. Are they to hasten into human society ; but what kind of society ? Into that of reflecting persons like themselves ? In this case they would be but just where they set out. How can people who think

at all be together without adverting to the destination of Man? They must go then into such societies in which not a rational word is uttered, into the society of our slanderers, our fools, our gamblers, with whom the earth swarms to such a degree as to be an abomination to her own satellite. How is this to be expected of people who have cultivated their minds, and seek food for them wherever they are?

Neither is this plan for driving away the idea of death always efficacious with those who have recourse to it. With the thoroughly sensual it may certainly succeed, so long as they can flutter from one ball-room and from one gaming-table to another: but when opportunities for doing this are wanting, how are they then to keep aloof the dreaded idea? how above all, when confined to their chambers by illness, when tossing in sleepless nights on the solitary couch, when racking pains remind them of death, when the decline of their faculties announces its approach, when their once jovial friends whisper their apprehensions for them, when the physician shrugs his shoulders, and the scene is drawing to a close?

Indeed I clearly perceive that it is wretched comfort to say to a man: If it distresses you that you must once die, never think of death! He is compelled to think of it whether he will or not. Who, moreover, would advise him to banish from his mind that which so nearly concerns him, which is of such importance to him, and deserves his most serious attention! No,

it would be much more rational to try whether, not the idea of death, but the affliction which this idea is said to produce, might not easily be dispelled.

I, for my part, have succeeded in dispelling it: the idea that I must die gives me no uneasiness. But would it be fair to expect thousands in totally different situations to be equally successful. Have they had the education that I received? Is their time so entirely at their own disposal, that they can meditate duly on death? Are they alone in the world, and without any dear and tender connection, like me? How powerfully the latter circumstance alone may influence the form in which death appears to men, and how much a change in it may alter their views of death! It is at any rate unnatural, to require that dying should be a matter of indifference to those who are bound by the most sacred and tender ties of affection. And who knows besides, if the power which I possess of disregarding death may not be one of those properties with which only an individual here and there is gifted? Have I a right to reproach others with the want of a thing which they cannot give to themselves? Suffice it that thousands and tens of thousands declare it to be impossible for them to entertain the idea of death otherwise than as the idea of the greatest of evils; I cannot help believing them, just as I wish them to believe me when I tell them that the contrary is the case with me. Indeed I begin to be of opinion, that it is more consistent with the nature of Man to be afraid of death than to be indifferent to

it; and thus my way of thinking concerning death must be a deviation from Nature. Am I certain, again, that I shall continue in this way of thinking as long as I live? Perhaps, before I am aware of it the natural feeling may suddenly re-assert its rights, and with irresistible power overthrow my cold-blooded philosophical notion of death. Might not this happen, in case I were to perceive that the kind of death which Nature would prepare for me was one of the most painful? It is not so easy to die as one may imagine. Perhaps even the experience of so many painful deaths may have though a secret yet a considerable share in the general fear of death. I dare not flatly reply, that a painful death is in all cases an unnatural death, and that people ought to live naturally in order to die naturally, that is to say, at a good old age and without pain; for I have known old men after the most virtuous life die as hard as others in the flower of youth.

In short, it certainly seems as if men in general had need of some consolation on account of the idea of death; and if there is an alleviation for every evil that afflicts them, it would almost seem as if there must be something to cheer them for their present mortality; and if nothing were capable of cheering them on account of it but the hope of a future state, then——

But is not this too precipitate a conclusion? Admitting that death were an evil, nay the greatest of all evils, does it thence follow that there *must* be a con-

solation for it as for all other evils? With death life is at an end, and of course all comfort is at an end along with it. How can we draw conclusions from the evils which take place in the midst of life, or at least always presuppose life, concerning that evil which consists in the termination of life? If it is true that for all other evils for which there can be consolation, consolation is provided; all that is possible has been done for man, and he ought to be content. For the last evil he was not furnished with consolation, for this reason, because there could not be any consolation for the final evil, which is at the same time the last circumstance that befalls him. And if a person would here make a distinction between the feeling of the consequences of death, for which no consolation is needed, and the previous ideas of death, he ought to consider that this is consolation sufficient for Man, that whenever he thinks of death, he may also think that death is the last of evils, that evil which has none to succeed it, and with which the whole series of his afflictions is closed. This consolation he had not for any preceding affliction; if then death were even the greatest of evils, he would have for the greatest of evils the greatest of consolations.

I should belie my own feeling did I not admit this proposition to be harsh and repulsive. Such a consolation for death, that death is the last evil, would be suited only to beings destined to the exclusive endurance of evil, and whose existence was an uninterrupted chain of afflictions. We actually find indeed

that men who sigh under the incessant sense of pain or sorrow, for which they have no hope of relief but in death, have recourse to this consolation. But is not their number infinitely small compared with the rest of mankind, for whom life has evidently much more of good than of evil?—But such a doctrine is too untrue, too unnatural, ever to find general acceptance among men, even though it were to be preached by all the orators in the world,—indeed the most abominable doctrine that could be inculcated, and which would have no other effect than to encourage suicide.

I reject, therefore, from my heart, the consolation that death is the *last* of evils. It is not necessary for my tranquillity that I should wish for a future life; on the other hand, I have no occasion to deprecate it, neither do I deprecate the present life. Setting aside some very extraordinary and peculiar cases, I cannot help thinking meanly of him who does so. Whether those who preach this false gospel are in those peculiar predicaments or not, and whether they may not have brought themselves into them, I leave their own hearts to decide. At any rate, they ought not to endeavour to mislead me into the grossest ingratitude.

Should any one say: “Comfort yourselves, in regard to death, with the consideration, that in the long run we become tired of life, that the aged body contracts too many infirmities, and that it is well for us that we are enabled to escape from too great evils”—nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand

would answer :—" We are not tired of the game, as you call it ; if we are not destined to have much more, we can be content with little ; we cannot comprehend what there is consolatory in being released from great evils by the greatest of all." What reply can be made to this I know not : and upon the whole, these and similar representations cannot convey any consolation to the mind in regard to death, unless death be considered as a transition to another and a better world.

To me, therefore, it seems by no means to follow, that if there is consolation for all other evils, there is, however, no consolation for death, because death is the termination of life, and consequently when life is at an end, there is an end to all consolation. If there were a future state after death, then there would also be a consolation for death, not however the consolation of this, but the consolation of another life. I mean not to say that I believe it ; but yet this second life appears very possible.

If then there is no other imaginable consolation for death than the consolation of a second life—if the second life is possible—if there is consolation for every other evil prior to death—what follows ? If there follows nothing in favour of my existence after death, there follows at least nothing hostile to it. I must therefore be particularly averse to an existence after death, did I not acknowledge that this very first argument for a future state has made some impression

upon me. I cannot express myself more cautiously respecting its value. All will depend on the result of the others. To me 'tis matter of indifference; but I must not turn a deaf ear to the voice of Truth, be her decision what it may.

TENTH MEDITATION.

SECOND ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A
FUTURE STATE.

“As Man endued with reason cannot have any other consolation for the idea of his death than that which is furnished by an existence after death; so the wish, the desire, the longing after a future state, are so essentially peculiar to him, that he would be the only terrestrial being in contradiction with itself, if he were to wish, to desire, and to long in vain.”

This argument in proof of a future existence, more explicitly stated, will be something like what follows:—

Ask any man whether he would rather die or live. If he is in his senses, and not grievously afflicted by bodily suffering, he will decide for the latter. Put this question not only to the young but also to the aged; under the above-mentioned limitations the same answer is returned. The value of life is determined by a tacit concurrence of human nature in all human souls. The very brutes have an obscure sense

of it, and every living creature strives to preserve life as long as it can. In the human being, however, this feeling is infinitely stronger and more distinct. Every man has his little spot to which he is particularly attached, and in which, were it even the humblest cot, he wishes to live a little longer. Each has his goods which he would fain possess yet awhile, and his sources of pleasure, whence he would yet wish to draw. Each would like to see the issue of this or that public event, or how it will fare with this or that individual. The father wishes to see his children settled in the world, the grandfather the grandchildren, and the great-grandfather the great-grandchildren. The man who has founded a useful institution is desirous of witnessing its prosperous continuance, and he who merely plants a tree would fain repose in its shade. The pleasure of continuing to be uninterruptedly active has something irresistibly fascinating; the mere sense of existence is so sweet, that Man does not relinquish it unless compelled by extreme violence. Even those who hope after death to soar to a better world are glad to remain as long as they can in this nether sphere.

This desire of life, essential to Man, is naturally transformed, when he has convinced himself of the inevitable necessity of his death, into a wish that he may continue to exist after death. It is the same desire of life, only extended beyond the grave. Ask any virtuous man whether he would rather be annihilated when he dies or enter upon a new life—he will

choose the latter. He must be a bad man who wishes for annihilation. Nay, there is no idea that can impart more energy and serenity to the virtuous soul, than the idea of its immortality.

Must it not then strike in a particular manner the observer of his species, that this idea is to be found among all nations possessing the slightest degree of civilization? Scarcely has a nation emerged from the brute state before this idea obtains among it, clothed indeed in a thousand different garbs; but that is nothing to the purpose. When the idea itself is once there, it receives its clothing from the spirit of the age, the higher or lower degree of philosophy, the mode of life of men, their favourite occupations, and their notions of the highest happiness and misery.

It is, therefore, evident that, as the sensual nature of Man teaches him to desire life, so the desire of an existence after death awakes in him as soon as reason awakes. To the former alone the savage confines himself; the latter is the desire of the civilized man. The one is as strong as the other; nay frequently the latter far surpasses the former in intensity. In like manner the one is as essentially peculiar to Man as the other; for it is the duty of Man to cultivate his reason, and if he does so, the immediate consequence is a longing after a future state. Is not this longing the most innocent that can be? Is it not an honour to his heart? Does its gratification involve an internal contradiction? And if this is not the case, ought it not to be gratified?

How can a being be at variance with its actual instincts? It would then be destined not to be the being that it is destined to be. Should any one object :—" *Here* is no contradiction—man wishes to live and wishes not to live—that would be a contradiction : but he wishes to live and he dies ; that is, he cannot live any longer—that is no contradiction,"—he would only lay himself open to the suspicion of a desire to confound ideas. The question here is not of a contradiction of an instinct with itself, but of the contradiction of a being with its instinct ; and thus there certainly would here be contradiction. Now nothing of the kind is to be found again throughout all Nature. All the other beings with which we are acquainted are in perfect harmony with their instincts ; that is to say, it is possible for them to gratify their instincts, and they actually do gratify them. It cannot be otherwise. An actual instinct which a being possesses must be considered as a promise that is given to it. The promise must be fulfilled, and the fulfilment of such a promise is the gratification of the instinct. How could we so much as dream, that precisely the most perfect of terrestrial beings should be the only one in contradiction with his instinct? In this case, the most perfect of beings would be destined to be the most imperfect. In reality, however, Man is not at variance with his other instincts, so long as they keep within the limits of instincts ; in regard to his desire of an existence after death, this would be the only instance. Go through all his sensual and

higher instincts : for every one of them he finds gratification upon earth. Does he long for drink ?—springs gush forth for him in every part of its surface. Does he long for rest ?—he can set up his couch upon it wherever he pleases. Does he long for gratification for the eye and ear ?—pleasures for both these senses pour upon him from all quarters. Does he long for a wife ?—the Earth offers him his choice among her daughters.

In like manner, Man aspires to knowledge, and the earth furnishes him with inexhaustible sources of knowledge. He aspires to honour, and finds a thousand situations on earth where he may acquire it by merit. He aspires to the relish of the sublime and beautiful, and the earth presents to him one scene of the sublime and beautiful after another. He longs for the society of congenial souls, and these, too, he meets with upon earth. How is it possible to believe that Man, who is in perfect harmony with all his other instincts, should be at variance solely and alone with the first and most sacred of his instincts ? For, is not his longing after a future state such ? No : as there is a gratification for all his other instincts, so this, this *above all*, must be gratified. His longing after a future state is the promise given to him ; that future state itself is the fulfilment of the promise given : there must therefore be for him a life after death.

This mode of proving a future state is extremely pleasing and attractive, I admit ; but when I imagine

that I behold truth, let me not be deceived by mere appearances!

It has been objected, in the first place, against the high value alleged to be universally attached to life, that this is not the fact. Not that the objectors mean to appeal to our hypochondriacs or even to our suicides—no, they are well aware that the former, at such times when they are not tormented by their evil spirit, judge of the earth and of life just like other people, and that suicide always originates, if not from insanity, yet from the want of correct principles, in short from confused ideas. They appeal to the example of many of our dying young men, who are more willing to die than the aged, and thence conclude that the love of life may in reality originate only in the long habit of living. They appeal to the declaration of the great majority of persons who, when asked on their deathbeds if they should like to live their time over again, have answered in the negative. They appeal to the lowest classes, which form by far the greatest part of mankind, and by which life is so little prized that they are totally indifferent to death.

Supposing all this to be really true, still I am of opinion that the assertion concerning the universally acknowledged value of life may be perfectly consistent with it. As to those who willingly die young, there are perhaps quite as many who are most unwilling to die, because, as they say, they are so young and have not lived long. In others of contrary sentiments it is

perhaps a pure and genuine philosophy that inspires them with tranquil resignation to their fate, or religion, or perhaps even the belief in a future state, that thus elevates them above death. The influence of this doctrine on the dying is not to be denied. But if a man, when he once perceives that he cannot live much longer, rises superior by his principles to his early death, does it thence follow that he prizes life the less? I am myself a proof of the contrary. As I am a firm believer in God, I should, were it my lot to die to-day, be perfectly satisfied, that a wiser than I am had cut my life shorter than even that of my father. I should therefore be quite willing to die. Still I cannot deny, that if I might be permitted to live longer, I would rather live. Such too, I should suppose, would be the case with all those of my brethren who meet death cheerfully in early life.

With respect to the negative reply which most persons at the approach of death are said to give to the question whether they should like to run their career over again, they know but too well that it would avail them nothing if they were to say *Yes*. They think then that, under these circumstances, they best consult their honour if they answer *No*. Were it possible that they *could* begin their lives again, I should be curious to learn what reply many of them would then give. And if they did not all answer in the affirmative, according to my notions they would not do right; for, in their new career they would either be conscious that they had travelled over the same course before, or they

would not. In the latter case, many things might turn out better for them than, according to their opinion, they had done the first time; and, in the former case, many things could not fail to turn out better, for they would enjoy the benefit of their former experience, they would know the causes of their misfortunes, and might avoid them the second time. To me it seems probable also, that the wish to live their time over again may be extinguished in such persons by the belief that they shall be conducted by death into a better life. For the rest, there are certainly persons of contented dispositions, who, if they were asked the same question on their death-beds, would frankly answer in the affirmative. Who is there that would not wish to continue to lead an active life on earth? To the man of contented mind, who understands the art of making small pleasures great by means of his heart, the earth is still upon the whole an agreeable planet.

I now come to the lower classes for which life is asserted to have but little value. If this were really the case, it would be the most disgraceful thing that could be said of the upper classes; for to them alone this apathy must be owing. They must appropriate to themselves so immoderately disproportioned a share of the goods and enjoyments of the earth, that little or nothing would be left for their inferiors. It were then no wonder if life lost its worth in the eyes of the latter. The greater the poverty, wretchedness, and ignorance, in which they live, and the more they are harassed, the less certainly it is worth their while

to live. What a hint to the higher ranks to be humane, that they may not degrade thousands so low as to make them renounce the first sentiment of all living beings! If there are countries where the husbandman and the labourer are so wretched that, like the Blacks in the sugar-islands, they would rather die than live, may the Father of Mercies speedily grant to suffering humanity there a salutary revolution to reverse the order of things! In my country, God be praised, it is not thus. There the lower classes are as fond of life as the upper. Nor does it need so very much to produce the same effect everywhere. The love of life is universal; let it only not be cruelly stifled! If the people of the lower classes can procure, by labour not surpassing their strength, the first necessities of life in sufficient quantity and the means of making occasionally a little excursion into the domain of pleasure, they are truly happy and attached to life. They might in fact be rendered so everywhere, and the higher orders might still retain more, not only than the lower possess, but than they themselves need. It is the surest evidence of a humane system of government in a country, that the common people, as they are called, are fond of life. To the philanthropic traveller the appearance of this fondness for life among the people is truly gratifying. If the common man displays a certain indifference in regard to death, this proceeds not so much from a dislike of life, as from his religious notions. Giving implicit belief to his teachers, he entertains not the

least doubt of a future life. With him to die, to be removed to this second and better life, to be in heaven, and to be with God Almighty, are synonymous expressions. By the by, it is high time he should be taught that even in this life he is in the presence of his God.

I heartily concur then in the position, that the great worth of life is universally admitted. I recollect indeed some very striking examples which speak strongly in favour of it. I have heard of criminals, who had the choice left to them between imprisonment with hard labour for life and the sword. They were three in number. Two, without much hesitation, chose the former. The third, a man of ferocious mind, preferred decapitation. He was allowed four weeks to consider the matter, and being again asked, he too preferred life. He only required more time to come to a rational determination than the others, in whom gross depravity had not stifled the natural feeling, which, in him too, finally gained the ascendancy. Nay, I have known a still more striking instance in favour of the universality of the love of life. Every species of capital punishment being deemed inadequate for a most atrocious monster of villany, he was sentenced to be chained down for life in a recumbent posture. He was a young fellow, of a robust constitution, who had a prospect before him of half a century. He was like a raving madman when he heard this sentence, and begged that he might rather be broken on the wheel: it was

nevertheless carried into execution ; but the sight soon became too horrible for humanity. In a quarter of a year, therefore, it was resolved that mercy should be extended to him, that is, that he should be hanged : but he then solicited as a favour that he might be left in his chains, and so he has lain for many years and is attached to life.*

* Through powerful intercession his situation was at length mitigated, and he was allowed as much liberty as other prisoners. He contrived in the most artful manner to procure total liberty, and fled probably to another hemisphere—at least in his own country he has not since been seen or heard of.—
EDITOR.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING.

As then I have reason to believe that the love of existence is universal, I cannot doubt that it extends beyond the grave, and that, particularly in the dying, it may be transformed into a real longing for a second life. A sensible man, if asked whether he should not prefer a future state to annihilation, cannot do otherwise than answer yes. He would else either contradict himself, if he first had the instinct of prolonged existence and then had it not; or he would thereby betray an apprehension lest the future state should expose in him the hypocrite, who in this masked life felt himself under less restraint. For my part I must confess, that a future state, if such there be, would be more agreeable to me: but this cannot affect my present enquiry. It must now be matter of indifference to me what may be the result; and should this result be annihilation, of what avail would be all my wishing and longing for another life?

There precisely lies the difficulty for me in this

whole argument. Put into other words it would run thus :—" Because Man heartily wishes for and ardently desires an existence after death, there must be such an existence for him." What is there however but Man might heartily wish for and ardently desire ! Would it thence follow that it must be allotted to him, or even that it is possible to be so allotted ? But, methinks I hear some one reply :—" It must be nothing improper, at least nothing foolish, that Man ardently wishes for and desires ; if then it is something unobjectionable, something truly worthy of him, that is the object of his most ardent desire, you will surely retract your severe judgment. Consider only, that the wish for a future state is intimately connected with the destination of Man, with his destination to be wise and good : who then would not wish to keep growing still wiser and better to all eternity ? You admit that in itself it is not impossible that the human mind may be capable of existing after death—what then is there, who is there, to oppose the fulfilment of its *most sacred* wish ? Who ? *God* perhaps ? Oh ! if you believe in God, the point is settled. God is the most bountiful Being. Man is *capable* of existing after death—Man *wishes* to exist after death—by the God of heaven, Man *will* exist after death !"

The idea of the Deity we will leave out of the discussion for the present ; meanwhile, my friend, your reasoning makes an impression upon me. But, even admitting the wish for a future existence to be

the most *sacred* wish of Man, it may perhaps remain unfulfilled precisely because it is the most sacred—I mean the greatest, and consequently too great for him. You speak of the destination of Man to be wise and good, with which this wish is intimately connected ; but must not this destination, like the destination of every other being, have its limits ? Perhaps the highest degree of wisdom and virtue that Man has ever yet attained forms these limits, and perhaps the whole destination of Man is to strive to reach this height. Survey the earth ; every thing upon it is certainly contrived for the immortality of the different species, but not for the immortality of individual beings. The earth is incessantly exhibiting on all sides the appearance of renovated youth. All the species of beings, that walk, or crawl, or fly about upon it, are from time to time renewed. They never become extinct, and thus the ancient globe exhibits at this day as young and fresh and beautiful an aspect, as though it were still but in the dawn of its existence. Such too is the case with Man. In the immortality of our species we may confidently believe, for we see it—but what proof have we of our individual immortality ? Has any one ever returned from the dead ? And where is any similar instance of it in all Nature ?

“ The butterfly !—recollect his first grovelling state as a caterpillar and then the gayer life which he leads as a winged insect ! ”

Adduce not the butterfly as an example ; it is inapplicable. The caterpillar, in the state of a chrysalis,

is not dead, but continues to live in its shell-like case. The caterpillar and butterfly differ, not like Man in the first and Man in the second life, but like Man in childhood and Man in maturity in the first life. What then would you infer by your comparison? You might as well bring forward all the beetles and flies, every one of which is at first a grub or a maggot. But recollect that a being is not perfect till it is capable of propagating its species. Now a caterpillar cannot do this as a caterpillar, nor before it attains the butterfly state ; and therefore the butterfly is not the same animal for the second time, but the same animal for the first time in its mature and perfect state. And what does the butterfly after it has propagated? It lies down and dies. Just so does Man.

“ But might there not be an exception in regard to Man, and with the immortality of the species might not the immortality of the individuals belonging to it be associated? You admit yourself that the human soul can continue to exist in death.”

Yes, can, *can* !—but *must* it therefore continue to exist?

“ Not exactly *must*—but it *will*.”

This *will* does not follow of course.—An idea just occurs to me on the subject of the argument concerning the most ardent wish and desire. What wish can be more irreprehensible, and even more agreeable to wisdom and virtue, than the wish of a dying father

to be spared for the sake of his infant family? How fervent is this wish! Is it on that account fulfilled?

“ No indeed : but then *this* wish *cannot* be fulfilled. His body is on the verge of dissolution, from which it is impossible to save it. But—this father *can continue to exist in death* ; he can some time or other meet his children again ; and thus his wish *can hereafter* be fulfilled.”

Yes, it *can* !—And in regard to the universality of the belief in a future state among the natives of the earth, I am certainly correct when I say, it is not the fact, that it is to be found among every nation as soon as it has attained the lowest stage of civilization or advanced ever so little beyond the state of brute beasts. If this ever was the case, the notion could not have originated with that nation itself, but must have been brought to it by some foreign instructor. For my part, I am of opinion, that it requires a considerable degree of civilization before a nation can hit upon this doctrine of itself. I believe that it does not spring up till the propensity to excess is contracted. Perhaps it is itself a species of excess. As soon as men cannot procure food enough, clothing enough, apartments enough, furniture enough, arts enough, they can no longer procure existence enough. There have been many other notions which have prevailed among almost all nations, and have nevertheless been unfounded, for instance, the belief in evil spirits. If

the unfounded notion is a very agreeable one, it is no wonder that it should be adopted by all the world. Every body would like to dream a pleasing dream.

A consideration which has far more importance with me is, that as sense begets the desire of a longer life on earth, so reason, when considerably awakened, begets the desire of a future state after death ; and that, therefore, as the former desire is an instinct of the sensual man, so the latter is an instinct of the rational man.

It is true that no being can be at variance with its real instincts. I subscribe from thorough conviction to all that has been said on this subject.—An instinct is a promise given to its nature ; such a promise presupposes certain fulfilment ; wherever there is a genuine instinct of Nature, there also must be gratification for it. This too I am compelled to admit ; for, if I were to argue thus :—Nature promises nothing but what she gives, and what she does not give she has not promised : what she has promised therefore can only be inferred from what she has given—this would be as absurd as if I were to maintain that the gratification of a natural instinct must precede the instinct itself. In like manner, I subscribe to every thing that has been said respecting the actual gratification of all the other instincts of Man ; the evidence of our senses proves its truth. But now the question arises : Whether the desire of a future state belongs to the instincts of Man, or whether it ought not rather to be classed among his passions.

Every instinct *may* grow into a passion. Hunger is an instinct and must be gratified : but must gluttony too ? Sleepiness is an instinct and must be gratified : but must sluggishness also ? Sexual desire is an instinct and must be gratified ; but must lust also ? An instinct immoderately felt and expressed becomes a passion : and thus among the noblest instincts of Man there is not one but frequently degenerates into passion. Though Man may expect the gratification of his instincts, he has no right to demand the gratification of his passions ; and if he does Nature denies it and he becomes the scoff of all the world. The desire of living, of living as long as he can live, may certainly belong to his instincts : but if he is immoderate and insatiable in his desire of life ; if he wishes for an existence after death—is not this a passion of the first rank that he indulges ? How can he expect it to be gratified ?

No sooner have I made this objection than I feel myself that it is too harsh. The desire of Man to exist after death can by no means be classed among his passions. I will take hunger for example. This degenerates into gluttony when a man all at once desires three dinners instead of one ; but would you charge him with gluttony who should look for his dinner at the regular hour on three successive days ? Too much at once then is the craving of passion ; but enough at a time, so often as there is occasion for it, is what instinct requires. If Man wished to have two lives at once, then indeed he might justly be accused of a pas-

sion for life, but not if he only desires one life after another. In this case, the desire to live anew when the old life has ceased is nothing more than a continuation of the desire to enjoy the present life as long as possible. A desire to be immortal is merely the prolonged desire of living to be old.

To this, I must confess, I have nothing to reply : but another point of superior importance occurs to me. If I am compelled to admit that the desire of Man to exist after death belongs not to his passions but to his instincts, which must be gratified—still I know that there is a great difference between natural and factitious instincts. To the former alone is gratification promised. But does not the desire of a future state manifestly belong to the latter class? Men living in the primitive state of Nature have it not, as all the world knows. Were it a natural instinct, like hunger, they too must have it. What a multitude of factitious desires, on the other hand, are there not among polished nations! Things which the man of nature even holds in abhorrence are many of them indispensable necessities with our people of quality, as they are denominated.

This is certainly true, and it would be well worth while to write a secret history of the great world, in order to excite universal astonishment at the fact, that while one portion of mankind are racking their invention to extend their wants to infinity, another portion are puzzled almost to death to supply ever so scantily

their half dozen absolutely indispensable necessities. At the same time it should be well remarked, that precisely that portion of mankind who increase their instincts by hundreds know little or nothing of the instinct of a future state. I deem it therefore an insult to humanity to compare this its noble instinct with those ignoble ones. But, as the savage knows nothing of the instinct of a future state, must it thence follow that this instinct belongs to the factitious class?

Most certainly it does not awake till reason is considerably awakened. It would therefore depend on this, whether it is or it is not the destination of Man that his reason should be considerably awakened. How can I entertain the least doubt of this? Did he give himself reason, or was it conferred on him? Ah! if a being could give reason to itself, how gladly would the horse avail himself of this privilege; and if Man could give himself as much of it as he pleased, how delighted many a pampered blockhead, stupified by parental indulgence, would be to do so! But if reason was given to Man, it was given to him that he might make use of it; it was given to him that he might cultivate it to the utmost, in order that he might be able to employ it in the best possible manner. Any instinct therefore that first awakes in Man, when he duly cultivates and properly employs his reason, is as much a natural instinct in him as hunger, which he feels before he acquires the least degree of reason. Nay I believe that such an instinct belongs to the no-

bler class. And if the less noble shall be gratified, may we not rest assured that the more noble shall be gratified also?

Now, of all the nobler desires of Man, the desire of a future existence is certainly the noblest, and I should think every one must feel that he libelled himself, if he could compare it with those silly desires which are also produced by reason, but not by reason duly cultivated and still less properly directed; and therefore—therefore—

Here I must confess a light breaks in upon the valley of death.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THIRD ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE STATE.

MAN is incontestably distinguished from the whole animal creation by the most signal advantages. We shall say nothing of his erect posture, for every sparrow walks upright also, because it has but two legs; nor of his strength and swiftness, for the horse is stronger than he, and any hare will beat him in running; nor of his longevity, for the elephant lives to a greater age. But what far superior intelligence is displayed by Man to that discoverable in the brute. While the brute performs his apparently ingenious operations merely from natural instinct, and as it were mechanically; man can weigh every action beforehand, form plans, and alter and adapt them to each new circumstance that may arise. The oftener he performs the same action the better he performs it, and thus he is in a continual progress towards perfection. Nature has not chalked out for him a line from which he cannot deviate—he may make himself what he pleases. The brute is capable only of a limited

number of specific operations—but his sphere of action is unbounded. What a multitude of arts has his understanding invented! How many sciences has he cultivated and reduced into systems? Measuring the heavens as well as the earth—analysing and decomposing the elements of matter, as well as constructing the most ingenious instruments—a painter as well as a poet—a musician as well as a philosopher—he demonstrates in whatever he does the superiority of his nature. He alone is acquainted with the objects that surround him; all things else exist only to increase the stores of his knowledge. His eye, and his alone, penetrates into the arrangement of the universe, perceives the co-operation of things to certain purposes, and discovers the connection between causes and effects. He, and he alone, is susceptible not merely of sensible but also of abstract ideas, and has a taste for beauty and perfection. He alone is fascinated by the charms of nature and art—he alone is enraptured with the harmony of sweet sounds. He alone has moral feeling; he alone is a free agent; he alone is accessible to the sentiments of friendship and refined love. His body itself is the master-piece of the terrestrial world; he possesses all the senses of the brutes in the most suitable perfection, and can by cultivation or artificial aids increase their powers to a most astonishing degree. He, and he exclusively, beholds God in the works of creation, hears him in Nature, hears him in his heart, and adores the Eternal.

Such a being is Man! And has *such* a being occasion

to apprehend that he shall share the fate of creatures placed so infinitely below him, and that like them he shall be annihilated in death? He who is so highly distinguished in all respects must certainly possess a pre-eminence in the most important of all points, that of prolonged existence. As then this pre-eminence is not attached to the earthly life of Man, since not only animals but even trees and plants surpass him in longevity, there must be a future state for him after death to compensate for this otherwise wholly unaccountable inferiority.

But may we not draw from this circumstance a diametrically opposite conclusion? Man certainly possesses the most signal advantages as well over the brutes as over all other beings, and the preceding enumeration of them might be very much enlarged; but, for this very reason, that he is so highly distinguished, let him not desire still more, but be content with what he has. Is it not enough to be exalted above all the beings in a whole world? Or has Man a charter to be insatiable? Look at the other creatures; as they all come so they go again, and while they remain here they have infinitely less than he. Among them too there is considerable difference, many of them possessing much more than others; but as these, notwithstanding that distinction, return to nothing, so must he too who has the most of all. Is he not favoured beyond measure in the exclusive possession, for almost a whole century, of so many and so high prerogatives, and of the sovereignty over all the

beings in a whole world?—Strange conclusion!—that a creature who is distinguished in every other respect must likewise be distinguished in regard to death! Had this been intended, he would have been altogether exempted from its influence.

“But it is impossible that Man should not die. It is *possible* enough, on the other hand, that he should continue to exist after death. And as he cannot remain here for ever, consequently——”

Man desires too much:—let us take another survey of his prerogatives. From the same source whence flow those important advantages, from the faculty of reason, he derives also the dominion over the whole terrestrial world. This superiority cannot be denied, nor can its value to him be too highly appreciated. Let us begin with the animal kingdom! Can there be a more despotic power than what he exercises over this? He finds means to rid himself of every animal that is injurious, and to profit by every one that can be serviceable to him: and he makes prize at pleasure of both classes, whether they await his attack or strive to escape him by flight. If they surpass him in strength or swiftness, his reason compensates for the deficiency. This it was that taught him to discover the most sensible parts of the stronger horse and still more mighty elephant, so that while yet a boy he can direct them as he pleases. This it was that enabled him to invent the net to secure the fish, the trap to catch the mouse, the pipe to entice the bird into his snare, and the gun to prostrate the distant

stag. Many of the more useful animals he has contrived to tame, and he employs them, some in labour only, others first for labour and afterwards for food. On the one he places burdens; a second is destined to satisfy the cravings of his hunger, and a third to supply him with raiment. He even hunts out the fox, the wolf, and the bear, which flee before him to the recesses of the forests; he recognizes them merely by their traces, and strips them of their furs for the purpose of wearing them himself.

Now turn to the vegetable kingdom! There Man exercises the same arbitrary power as in the animal kingdom. There too he converts whatever possesses the requisite properties into food, drink, and clothing. He cuts the cabbage, presses the grapes, gathers the fruit, reaps the corn, hackles the flax. With his hatchet he fells the gigantic oak as though it were a sunflower, and it must fall which way soever he pleases. He overthrows whole forests, and with the wood he warms himself in winter, cooks his victuals, builds his house, and exports the surplus to other countries. As he draws upon the stores of the vegetable world for food, so also he resorts to it for medicines. With its herbs he heals his wounds, purifies his blood, and strengthens his stomach. He employs roots and barks for the restoration of his health. He plants flowers in rows and groups, feasts his eye upon their beautiful tints, inhales their refreshing fragrance, plucks them for nosegays, and binds them up into garlands.

Nay even the mineral kingdom itself is at his disposal. He digs the metals with wonderful skill out of the bowels of the earth, works them up into the most ingenious instruments and the most beautiful trinkets, and coins out of them his money, which is the soul of commerce. He collects precious stones and with them fabricates the most splendid jewels. He burns the limestone to make cement for his walls, and splits the slate to cover his roofs. He cleaves the solid granite and carries high-roads through massive rocks. In short, he rules with despotic sway over every thing that belongs to the earth on which he is placed.

These are interesting considerations; let us pursue them farther! All-powerful Man reigns over the earth itself. He digs and ploughs its surface, and it is obliged to produce for him whatever crops he pleases. If he finds the upper soil too scanty, he digs deeper, and if he discovers better strata below, he throws them up and reverses their situations. He sinks wells, lowers hills, fills up dales, converts swamps into meadows, sandy wastes into gardens and pleasure-grounds, here roots up a wood and there plants another. He can subject the very climates to his will. His reason renders him more independent of their variety than any species of the brutes. He knows how to clothe himself agreeably to the temperature of each, and to find sustenance in any of them, so that he soon becomes accustomed to every region of the globe. Thus not merely a portion of

the earth, but the whole earth is his own. If, however, he chooses to remain at home, and yet wishes to enjoy the productions of every country, he procures them by means of commerce. He can even improve the ruder clime of his native land by felling the immense forests, draining the morasses, and bringing them into cultivation. The sea itself must submit to his dominion. His reason teaches him to construct vehicles for water as well as for land, and he flies with undaunted courage over boundless oceans. Let tempests drive him ever so far out of his course, let him be tossed about ever so long upon the billows without beholding land, his compass never fails to inform him where he is. Even the primary elements of matter have not been able to elude his grasp, and he is extending his authority over them with every century. Soaring aloft into the air, as well as diving into the depths of the sea, he produces fire and extinguishes it again. He bounds the waters with dykes; he builds bridges, and by long, deep canals he unites river with river. He governs the very lightning by conductors; he dissipates rain-clouds by thundering explosions. Earthquakes and tempests are yet left for him to overcome, and there can be no doubt that in process of time his reason will give him more authority over these also than he at present possesses.

And is this sovereign of the earth to be himself reduced to earth! Is it to be believed that so complete a dominion over all the beings which surround

him will terminate in the complete annihilation of his own existence? At first so much pomp and consequence, and at last—nothing !

Just look around you and say, if every thing in nature be not of merely transient duration. Consider the American aloe—what long preparation Nature makes for its flowering, and when it has blossomed, what is it? Consider the oak, for ages an ornament to the forest—is it not at length subject to decay? Consider the elephant and the whale—what a mass of flesh is here accumulated, and for what purpose, as not a single grain of it is ultimately left? Consider the volcano—what awful magnificence it displays for many centuries, but even the volcano is finally exhausted and tumbles in. Thus Man too is but a transitory being, and at length returns with all his glories to the dust from which he sprung. He drew the grand prize in the lottery of existence; and so long as he lives he is the lord of all things around him. Is it not then enough for him to be, as before observed, for nearly one hundred years the sovereign of all contemporary beings?

But Man has rendered such important services to the earth, that on this account alone he deserves at his departure from it some pre-eminence above the brutes. Without him what would it be? In none but its warmest regions would it resemble a garden; the greater part of it would indeed exhibit upon its elevations grand, wild, and romantic scenery; but the lowlands would be nothing but deserts and swamps.

From the primitive forests, overthrown by storms or decayed by age, new ones would from time to time spring up and intercept the rays of the sun from the earth, so that it would never dry. Dews, fogs, and rain, incessantly dripping from the trees, would collect in the hollows and at length form one vast morass, the pestiferous exhalations of which would infect the air, so that it would be habitable for very few species of animals, vermin excepted. May not, in this way, most of the land-animals be indebted to Man for the perpetuation of their existence? All the fertile fields, meadows, and pastures, are the result of his industry, and all the towns and villages which embellish the earth are literally the work of his hand. By careful culture he has improved the different species of grain, flowers, and fruit. He has transplanted trees, shrubs, herbs, and roots of all kinds, from southern into northern regions, which would otherwise at this day be miserably poor, and have nothing but the most wretched indigenous vegetables to produce. What, on the other hand, is done by brutes for the earth? Very few species only assist in its cultivation, but not without being trained to it by Man, and then only under his incessant superintendence and direction; all the others merely graze and glut themselves upon it, giving back in return first their dung and finally their carcasses. Man, on the other hand, confers such important benefits on the earth that he deserves to continue to exist in death, and as he is capable of such prolonged existence, this is the only reward he can receive.

Without it he, the most industrious of all the inhabitants of the globe, would have comparatively less than the brutes, which suffer him to sow for them, and which moreover rob him of his seed in the field, in the barn, and in the granary, and take as great pains to spoil, waste, and destroy, wherever they go, as he does to cultivate, improve, and embellish. Or, has he been endowed with reason solely that it may create more labour for him ?

This, I would reply, is an extraordinary kind of argument. Did you ever hear of important prerogatives unaccompanied with important duties ? Is it enough to desire to enjoy the one without fulfilling the other ? And if a person performs the duties which arise out of his prerogatives, can he desire a special reward on that account ? or, is he not rewarded by the prerogatives themselves ? If Man has been invested with the chief authority over the earth, he is of course charged with the especial care of and superintendence over it ; if he will not undertake the latter, he must renounce the former. And for whose benefit is it that he tills, plants, and beautifies the earth ? Surely not for that of the earth ? To the inanimate clod it must be wholly indifferent whether it looks well or ill, whether it is covered with verdure and flowers, or lies bare and waste. Or, is it for the sake of the animal creation ? Man denies that it possesses a sense of beauty—consequently he embellishes the earth for himself alone. For himself he builds towns and villages upon it ; for

himself he cultivates fields and gardens; for himself he has improved the various sorts of corn, flowers, and fruit; for himself he has transplanted the exotics of the south into northern regions, and by degrees naturalized them there; for himself he drains swamps and morasses, and if several kinds of land-animals thereby acquire the right of citizens of the world, he checks, on the other hand, by the same means, the increase of the aquatic species. In bringing ancient wastes into cultivation, nothing is farther from his thoughts than to afford a wider range for the multiplication of the former class; and if this result nevertheless follows, it follows in like manner for his benefit alone. Several of these species of animals, the existence of which he ascribes to himself, assist him faithfully in his labours. If it is necessary for him first to train them, and if they cannot labour without him, this does not affect the question: they do it—that is enough. Are not all the operations of agriculture more dependent upon animal labour than human labour? Is not almost all the inland traffic carried on by means of animals?—And how scantily are they fed for their services! How cruelly are they often treated! Would it not be better for many of them that they had not come into existence through his means than that he should make their lives an everlasting torment? If other species of animals which perform no labour for him sometimes visit his crops and take tithe from them; he knows full well that most of these are fattening themselves

merely to supply his table with a variety of delicacies. From the services of Man to the earth, it seems to me, therefore, that no inference can be drawn in favour of a future state ; for, in this particular Man evidently acts with an interested motive, and whoever so acts has no claim to reward.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE SAME ARGUMENT.

WE will admit then that Man does not pay too dearly for his reason by the labour which it imposes upon him; and that whatever he does for the earth is in fact done for himself. But there is another point of view in which his reason is his bane, and such a bane, that, if he had no existence after death to hope for, notwithstanding the possession of reason and the superiority which it confers, he would be in reality more unfortunate than the brutes to whom it is denied. This, however, cannot be the case. Man, who is evidently destined for the highest happiness by means of his reason, cannot possibly be rendered supremely miserable by it: for his nature is no more in contradiction with *his powers* than it is in contradiction with *his instincts*.

Here my whole attention is roused. Proceed—I will listen and meditate.

“The brutes though they must all die have no notion of death. They die without knowing what be-

fals them. In dying they all seem in their way to struggle against death ; but in fact they only struggle against the pains which it occasions. In like manner they strive to evade the dangers of death solely because those dangers are attended with pain. Thus too they carefully heal their wounds, because the sense of pain impels them to do so. You may convince yourself from daily observation that brute animals really know not what death is. Several lambs, for example, are led to the slaughter-block, and each of them not only goes up to it quietly, but one sees another bleed, quiver, and die, without manifesting any uneasiness. Each remains quiet till its turn comes to be lifted upon the block and stuck, when it kicks as its predecessor did, and that is all. A fowl is killed, and the other fowls come up and drink its blood. Lay it yet fluttering upon the ground, and they will surround and peck at it. Throw away its intestines, and all the poultry in the yard will greedily snap at them, drag them about, fight obstinately for the prize, and at length devour them. A living animal passes by a dead one without taking the least notice of it, unless it be to prey upon the carcase.

“ As then the brutes when they die are not even conscious that they are dying, still less do they know beforehand that they must once die. Let it not be asked why nine out of ten birds which are perched upon a branch fly away, or why two out of three hares which are playing together, run off, when one of their number is killed by a gun-shot ? In this case it is

merely the report of the piece that frightens them away. Fire in a different direction and the effect will be the same : but take aim at them with a bow instead of a gun, and it will be less complete. If it were possible to kill one of their number without noise and to place one's self in such a situation as not to be seen by them, they might all, unless scared by some accidental circumstance, be successively dispatched. Hence those savages who use no other weapons than bows and arrows for hunting derive considerable advantage from this practice, because the animals, not being rendered shy by the report of fire-arms, are the more easily shot. In like manner, it is well known, that all the animals in islands wholly uninhabited by Man were found, upon their first discovery by navigators, to be much tamer than those of inhabited countries ; but the firing of guns soon made them as shy as they are with us. Even here the experienced hare is less afraid of the shepherd than of the sportsman, because she sees that the former has no gun : and at the sight of the gun she runs away, not from the apprehension of death, but from apprehension of the report. Let it not farther be asked why, when two hogs are killed in succession, the second makes such a hideous noise when the butcher enters the sty ? This is no proof that the animal anticipates his death. He saw how the butcher dragged away his companion, and heard how dismally the latter screamed with pain—hence he is afraid of the man, but not as being the person by whose hand he is to die. These hogs, on the

contrary, like all animals which are fattened, furnish the strongest proof that brutes have no presentiment of death. If the hog knew that he should be slaughtered, he would perceive, from the unusual abundance of food with which he is supplied, that his death is near at hand. He would not of course gorge himself, in compliance with the wishes of his owner, but strive by rigid fasting, as the only method of prolonging life, to defer the fatal day to as distant a period as possible. In like manner the silliest of geese would not be so foolish as to gobble up the corn till she is fat enough for the spit ; but would require cramming like her unfortunate sisters. In short, if any of the animals which we slaughter knew beforehand that they were to die, instead of feeding freely till they grew fat, they would one and all keep themselves as lean as they possibly could.

“ As, then, the brutes have no notion that they must once die, it naturally follows, that during their whole lives they feel no apprehension and still less horror of death. How can any being dread an impending catastrophe of which it is utterly ignorant ? How happy then are the brutes in their way, in being thus exempted from the fear of death ! Hence all their pleasures are pure and perfect as long as they live. Till their latest moments they are as cheerful as ever, sing, neigh, hop, run and frisk about ; and when the mortal blow is dealt by the gun, the axe, or the knife, death occasions them not the slightest suffering be-

yond the pain which necessarily attends it at the instant when it takes place.

“ Contrast with this picture the state of Man. How few are the years of his life before he learns what death is, and before he is thoroughly convinced that he too must die ! As soon as his reason awakes, he cannot help saying to himself at the sight of a corpse — ‘ This was a man ; he died—I too am man, and must die as well as he.—To-day ’tis his turn ; to-morrow perhaps mine.’—From this moment the idea of death is indelibly impressed upon his mind—it associates with all other important ideas, it haunts him incessantly, it disturbs, embitters, and poisons all his enjoyments, and particularly those which he estimates the highest. Is he delighted with a beautiful prospect from a commanding eminence—he reads on its margin the words : Heaven and earth shall pass away for thee. Is he charmed with the return of spring—a deep sigh heaves his bosom at the thought that it may be the last. Is he comfortable in his newly erected habitation—what avails it ?—an inward voice tells him that he must once exchange it for his last narrow house. Does he walk in his garden—on every wall he sees inscribed—The time will come when thou shalt enjoy thyself here no longer. Does he feel happy in the possession of knowledge—the presentiment of death renders him more miserable than the most ignorant of his species. Does he clasp a friend in his arms—he involuntarily thinks of their last em-

brace. Will he merely regale himself with good cheer—Thou future food of worms, he exclaims, to what end wouldst thou hold banquet here?—throws down knife and fork and pushes aside the glass.

“ If death, which Man knows to be his inevitable lot, were the termination of his existence, then indeed it were better for him that he had never had any relish for the beauties of nature, that he had never thought of building houses and planting gardens, that he had never taken pains to acquire learning, that he had kept aloof from the ties of friendship, and that he renounced the sooner the better all concern for his farther preservation; that the fate which he cannot escape might overtake him as speedily as possible and put an end to his misery.—Such is the melancholy state of Man!—a state which he owes to reason and to reason alone. But for this he would have no foreknowledge of death, and thus, with all the vaunted superiority which it confers, is he rendered by means of it far more miserable than the brute. Is it possible that he can be so?—But he is and must be so, unless he has the most confident hope that he shall continue to exist after death. Consequently his hope of a future existence, which has intrinsic possibility, remains unshaken; for it is more conformable to reason to assume something possible as true, than to adopt the grossest of all contradictions.”

Who can deny that this view of the subject is highly gratifying? But, in the first place, it may be replied, that the brutes pay dearly enough for their

ignorance of death, since the consequence of it is—that they are slaughtered. If they had a foreknowledge of their fate, they would assuredly flee so far from Man that he could never reach them. Against the disadvantage, therefore, which he certainly sustains in the exclusive foreknowledge of his death, he must place the advantage of being able to kill them whenever he pleases;—an advantage by which his condition is inexpressibly meliorated.

Farther—since Man must once die, it admits of a question, whether it be not much more to his interest to know it beforehand than not to know it. May not this foreknowledge be the greatest benefit that could have been conferred upon him, and the highest privilege with which he could have been invested? May it not warn him to shun such mortal dangers as are to be avoided, when he perceives that they threaten him with death? In diseases which are not attended with acute pain, will he not seek the means of cure, because, notwithstanding this freedom from pain, they may still prove fatal? Will he not devise all possible expedients for the preservation of his life? Consequently, would not the foreknowledge of death be the only medium of giving at least the utmost duration to his life, and of making him for as long a period as possible master of the earth?

Lastly, it still remains a question, whether Man, if he had the option to resign his reason and thus be relieved from the fear of death, or to retain his reason at the price of being still subject to that fear, would

not prefer the latter. Whoever has once tasted the blessings flowing from reason would not voluntarily relinquish them at any rate. Thus then it would appear, that great favour has been shown to him, inasmuch as the very alternative which he would himself have chosen has been actually chosen for him.

The principal point however, still is—whether such a fear and such an awe of death as are here described necessarily result from the knowledge that it must happen. I continue to maintain the contrary, and I am acquainted with others who coincide in my opinion. By far the greater part of mankind, however, contend strongly for the affirmative, appealing to the natural horror of death which we should never be able to eradicate, and charging us, their antagonists, with merely endeavouring to hide it from ourselves: while we, on the other hand, assert, that this horror is not natural, but that it has been produced by education and by the example of others from infancy upward. Both parties have philosophers of the first rank on their side; and, as there is no supreme tribunal to which either philosophical opinions or human feelings are amenable, each ought to treat the other with respect, which, in such contests, is unfortunately but too often wanting.

It is true, that the mere foreknowledge of such inevitable circumstances as are directly contrary to our wishes suffices to make a very disagreeable impression upon us; for which reason it is a great bles-

sing that futurity is concealed by a thick veil from our view. Should any one reply, that such impressions cannot arise from any other cause than the just presupposition, that in these disagreeable situations we shall continue to exist with a consciousness of ourselves and a feeling of them (which is wholly inapplicable to death): I am not sure that this explanation would be satisfactory. One of my oldest acquaintances, the evening before his death, gave a supper to his friends. Our party—a very jovial one—broke up about midnight. Our host was to all appearance in perfect health, and in higher spirits than we had seen him for a long time. By daybreak I received information that an hour after we left him he died of apoplexy. Had this man known what was to happen, would he have invited us to supper, or if he even had done so, would he have possessed sufficient self-command to be so cheerful among us as he was?

I will take myself as an example.—Suppose I knew for certain that lightning would some time or other strike my house and kill me in bed. Why then, I should find means to prevent it by pulling down my house and building a new one on another spot. Well:—but, supposing I only knew generally that I was destined to die by lightning; should I really feel quite indifferent about the matter, and remain free from all apprehension whenever a thunder-storm approached?—Or, supposing I knew that I should some time or other be shot, without knowing by whom; should I not, whenever I went out with other

persons a-shooting, frequently look round at my companions, with more anxiety, and keep at a greater distance from them than I am now accustomed to do? In rambling through woods and solitary places should I not be alarmed by every person whom I might chance to meet with a gun in his hand? Were I to deny all this, my own heart would give me the lie. Does this differ in any respect, but in degree and in the application to particular cases, from what is asserted concerning the fear and horror of death generally, as arising from a foreknowledge that it must happen? I can also easily conceive that, the more irritable the nerves and the more lively the imagination of any individual, the more keenly will he suffer from this apprehension.

Though I cannot deny that without the foreknowledge of death innumerable human souls would feel no fear of it; though I am likewise obliged to admit that the foreknowledge of death is solely a consequence of reason; still the nature of Man seems to be set, by means of reason, in contradiction with itself. As this contradiction would be removed and perfect harmony diffused throughout human nature in general if there were a future state after death; and as such a state has, in my mind, internal possibility: I must confess that I am particularly struck with the position just now advanced, that *it is more rational to assume something possible as true than to adopt a contradiction.*

Methinks I hear some one say—"You are again playing with the word *contradiction*." My business,

my friend, is of too serious a nature to admit of any play upon words. Instead of merely asserting that Nature has taken care in a thousand ways to render the fear of death no annoyance to Man, you would do better, to mention only one of these ways : and when you likewise merely allege that Man, who is susceptible of feeling more pain from the idea of death than the brute, has stronger grounds of consolation under it than the irrational animal, you ought to inform us what those grounds are.

Hearken to one more objection :—Why should Man be the only one of all terrestrial beings that continues to exist after death ?

But—why should he be the only one of all terrestrial beings that has a foreknowledge of his death ? Must not this foreknowledge lead him to surmise that he shall continue to exist after death ? Must it not announce, promise, assure him of a future state ? Does not a painful exception on the one hand, entitle him to a pleasing exception on the other ; that is to say, if the latter can take place ? If then the same reason which caused Man to discover that he shall die, were also to reveal to him that he shall continue to exist after death, would not this produce the most admirable harmony in his nature ? And if harmony must exist in his nature, as it is found to exist in the nature of all other beings—and if it cannot exist in his nature unless there be a future state for him after death—am I not constrained to believe in a future state ?

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

FOURTH ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE
STATE.

I HAVE reconsidered, on my favourite eminence, the results of my previous meditations, and must confess that collectively they had a much stronger effect upon me than individually. I am therefore at this moment in a very happy disposition of mind, and will pursue the investigation of my subject.

When we figure to ourselves such men as Newton, Locke, Leibnitz, Voltaire, first in the cradle, and then in the maturity of their genius, we are astonished to find what such a mere moving mass of flesh as a new-born infant is capable of becoming. Man possesses really wonderful faculties. True as this is, so true is it also that he evidently possesses far too many faculties, and an absolutely unjustifiable superabundance of them, if his existence terminates with his death. The exposition of this argument deserves the particular attention of the philosopher.

The wonderful faculties of Man consist in the ex-

traordinary capabilities with which he is endowed. First Nature, then society, afterwards circumstances, and lastly Man himself by his own industry, concur in their developement: and it is a heavenly sight to see a highly cultivated person. Of course it is not bodily powers to which I am alluding. But how few are there who attain this high degree of cultivation! It would be a miserable evasion if we were to attribute this merely to the essential difference of human souls or organizations. Defective education, faulty instruction, the want of opportunity even for looking on, are by far more frequent causes of this. Thus innumerable individuals of the lowest classes, even in the more polished Europe, remain exceedingly far behind-hand; though it is daily found from experience, that pupils out of those classes who have the good fortune to be placed early enough under better tuition are susceptible of the same cultivation. On extending our observations beyond Europe, we find the great mass of mankind more and more unpolished, rude, and brutal: and when we come to the savage nations, properly so called, how closely their state borders on that of the apes! In them nevertheless lie the same germs of human perfection; for our forefathers were savages, like them. Nay more—half the human race die before they have attained the years appointed by Nature for the cultivation of the mind. Innate corporeal debility, parental fondness carried to excess, or the total want of it, poverty, and half a dozen equally dangerous diseases to which every individual

is exposed in the first ten years of his life, annually sweep innumerable children from the face of the earth. Many are placed upon the earth merely to find a grave in it; nay many even come dead into the world. In all these there are nevertheless the same germs of powers; but for what purpose did they receive them?

Man was not endowed with his capabilities merely that by cultivation he might form them into powers, but that he might afterwards employ the powers so formed. It is the same throughout all Nature; and if it is a sublime sight to see a highly cultivated man, it is a spectacle far more sublime to see a highly cultivated man exceedingly active. Whoever believes in a God must discover in such a man the image of God. And yet it fares no better with the employment of the human powers than with the cultivation of the human faculties. Very few persons occupy those stations in society for which they are fitted. External circumstances, birth, property, nay frequently mere accident, allot their place to far the greater number. All these are thereby rendered wholly unserviceable, or are much less useful than they might otherwise have been. Thousands would have made great proficiency in the sciences; but poverty compels them to follow a trade. Thousands possess a genius for the arts; but their parents insist on their being scholars, and they turn out smatterers. Thousands might have become clever mechanics, but, from having inherited the tools, they are wretched artists. Even among those who choose their own profession, this choice

rarely accords with their peculiar qualifications and powers. The persuasions of other young persons, the specious attractions of this or that vocation, the love of independence, some youthful prejudice or other, or a whim which the slightest reflection would have dispelled as rapidly as it was conceived, decide the majority and decide them wrong. This they find out in the sequel; but it is then too late to think of changing their profession. They labour on therefore in their injudiciously chosen vocation, with inability or with disgust, and in either case to little purpose. Were every member of society placed in that situation for which he is fitted by his qualifications and the measure of his powers, how infinitely less would be the mass of human misery! Each State would resemble a healthy body, in which every member promotes to the utmost the welfare of the whole, at the same time with its own, and the world would know nothing of those bunglers with whom every profession at present swarms.

This consideration may be carried still farther. Even those who have not only had the luck to choose their own profession, but who have made a judicious choice, frequently succeed but partially in the employment of their powers. How difficult is it not often for the cleverest and most active men to find a proper sphere for their activity! Not appreciated, on the one hand, and, on the other, though appreciated yet at the same time envied or even feared, they find the most unworthy persons continually raised over their heads,

are discouraged, and draw back within themselves, or are at least content with a sphere in which they cannot employ the tenth part of their energies. Others, though they may have the good fortune to enter early enough upon the sphere for which they are qualified, are thwarted in all their operations. It is as though every thing about them conspired to prevent their success, and circumstances combined to throw insuperable obstacles in the way of all their efforts, and to render the execution of every plan, how well digested soever, utterly impracticable. Others for a time labour prosperously in their vocation; but are soon seized with a lingering and incurable disease, which compels them to contract their activity from a large to a small scale, to suspend works which they had commenced, and to abandon altogether others which they had projected. Nay many are snatched away by death in the very flower of their age, and they involuntarily disappoint the world which expected yet much from them. One of the most striking observations made by the enquirer into the history of the arts, sciences, and useful institutions and inventions is, that the greatest geniuses have generally been short-lived; that men who have projected the most beneficent plans have generally been summoned away by Fate in the midst of their labours; and that almost all those who have attempted improvements have been obliged by a premature death to leave their enterprises unfinished.

When all these things are considered, the question

forces itself upon us : How is this ? In the first place, such a prodigious quantity of the capabilities of human beings are lost, that we cannot be sure if but the thousandth part of them attain considerable development ; and in the next, an inconceivable quantity of actual powers are not duly applied, and are either wholly thrown away, or perform so little that they might almost as well not exist at all. . . . How does this accord with the rest of Nature, in which nothing, absolutely nothing, is lost ? How does it accord with the wisdom discoverable in all the other arrangements of the world with which we are acquainted ? Let this wisdom originate from what quarter it will, so much is certain, that it appears in all things around us, and every work not made by Man bears its impress. By means of this wisdom perceptible throughout all nature, we find in every occurrence and appearance in nature a certain end for which it happens and appears, and this end is always so much the more important and sublime, the more important that occurrence and appearance. Here then, in the most important of occurrences, in the most sublime of phenomena, in the case of the human capabilities which are either not at all or but partially developed, or of the human powers themselves which in like manner are either not at all or but partially applied, there would either be no end whatever, or at least only such a one as would be so wholly disproportionate to the means employed, that their profusion would be the most wanton waste which any rational being

could possibly conceive. Such a thing, however, cannot be ; but the destination of Man itself must involve an extraordinary deviation from the general destination of beings, by which this otherwise incomprehensible profusion, when compared with the due proportion between means and ends universally apparent throughout the rest of Nature, is explained, justified, and presented as the greatest wisdom.

Another consideration here occurs to raise this opinion above the highest step of probability. There are not only extremely few who very highly cultivate their capabilities, and very actively employ their powers ; but there never yet existed a single individual who attained perfection in the culture of the one and the application of the other. Noble as is the sight which a highly cultivated and remarkably useful man affords, still we do not see in him by far so much as we should perceive, if his death did not deprive us of the sight of his highest glory. What dying philosopher would rejoice to stand on the limit of his existence, because he found himself all at once at the limit of his knowledge ? What upright man will deem death a good, because, had he lived ever so much longer, he could not have advanced any farther in virtue ? What public-spirited individual on his death-bed will console himself for the approaching close of his days, by imagining that he could not have still added to the mass of his usefulness ?—No ; even the wisest may yet become far more wise. He has still much more

to learn than he has already learned : nay, the more he learns the more he is himself aware that he has much more to learn. The merely sensible world, Nature, is for him inexhaustible ; and were his life prolonged to a hundred, nay, to a thousand years, he would not have finished with the earth alone. And then the world of his reason, the world of his abstract ideas—does not this open to his inquiring mind a store for a whole eternity ? To-day the wise man is wiser than he was yesterday ; if he is living to-morrow, to-morrow he may be still wiser, and so on *ad infinitum*. In like manner the best of men may become much better. He has still faults to correct, passions to control, desires to reconcile, and to bring more and more under the supremacy of the desire of doing good. He can still continue to strengthen his moral sense, to rectify and refine his notions of right and wrong, to purify the motives of his good actions, to carry his self-denial to a higher pitch, to render himself more willing to make sacrifices, and by a longer habit of good to confirm and improve himself in the practice of it. To-day the good man is better than he was yesterday ; if he is living to-morrow, to-morrow he may be still better, and so on *ad infinitum*. In like manner the most useful man may become still more useful. Ah ! how much good yet remains to be done on earth ! How much needless human suffering is there yet to relieve ! But it cannot be relieved unless by the joint efforts of generous philanthropists.

The public-spirited friend of mankind is never without plans for their benefit, and let death overtake him when it will, it always finds him in the midst of some of them. And had he even executed all that he had projected, still he can form new plans, and who is fitter to carry them into effect than he—he who, from his knowledge of men and things, is enabled to judge correctly of the practicability or impracticability of a scheme, and to foresee and vanquish obstacles, and whose mind has long been steeled by the habit of enterprise against every danger? To-day the public-spirited man is more useful than he was yesterday; if he is living to-morrow, to-morrow he can be still more useful, and so on *ad infinitum*.

What do we see here?—What but capabilities for everlasting existence in Man? How does this harmonize with the brief existence which is actually allotted to him upon earth? On the one hand he appears as a being formed for immortality, and on the other he succumbs to the general mortality earlier than many species of brutes, which, by the time they have arrived at middle age, have developed their powers as far as they ever can be developed. This is something most contradictory; and so that magnificent, that sublime spectacle which Man at first seems to present, turns when more closely considered into the meanest, the most wretched, and the most pitiful of sights. May not the capabilities for powers which Man possesses be compared with a foundation that is laid for a building,

and the developement of these capabilities into real powers, together with the application of those powers, with the superstructure raised upon that foundation? Must not the dimensions of the foundation so laid be duly proportioned to the dimensions of the building to be erected upon it? Would any one ever think of laying the same foundation for a hog-sty as for a palace or a tower? This would indeed be a senseless waste of valuable materials. Now, the architecture of Nature is, in fact, neither more imperfect nor less adapted to its purpose than ours. Where hills were to be raised there were laid only the foundations of hills; but vast mountains were provided with immense bases. In like manner plants which grow to no great height are furnished with but short roots; whereas the lofty oak, which is destined to pierce the clouds, has received a substratum of roots of such depth as to enable it to defy for ages the fury of the most violent tempests. We discover the same principle in the animal kingdom. All the animals possess the proportion of powers best suited to their destination, their way of life, and the duration of their existence. Is then Man the only being constructed in opposition to the general principles of Nature? is he the only deviation from those principles, and that without any assignable reason? If so he must resemble a hog-sty for which the builder has laid a foundation suitable for a tower. What can authorize us to fling such downright blasphemy in the face of that wisdom which is so mani-

fest in all the other arrangements of the globe, nay, of the whole universe, as far as our feeble sight can penetrate ?

No, that *cannot* be. Man derived his existence and his powers from the same source whence all the other terrestrial beings received theirs, and he was gifted with them agreeably to the same laws and principles. His capabilities, therefore, must be as duly cultivated, and his powers themselves as duly applied, as the capabilities and powers of all other terrestrial beings. If, in the present life, this is not done at all by many, only in part by the great majority, and not completely by any individual, there must be a future state in reserve in which it shall duly take place. Now, indeed, I perceive the reason why Man is endued with such an extraordinary measure of capabilities and powers. Now that being, which apparently forms so glaring a contrast with the perfect constitution of other beings, Man, stands confessed the crown of them all. Whoever is capable of becoming continually wiser, and better, and more beneficent, must become so ; and he who is capable of becoming so *ad infinitum*, must become so *ad infinitum*. The capabilities for eternity which Man possesses guarantee eternity to him. He surveys his body, and concludes from the limits of its growth and its powers that his body is destined to annihilation. Let him then feast on the contemplation of himself, the contemplation of the spiritual essence that animates this body, and conclude, from the unbounded increase of which its powers are susceptible, that the

mind is not destined to annihilation. The latter inference cannot be less correct than the former. For him death can be no other than a transition to a second life, and it will certainly be not less beneficial to him than it was unavoidable. At any rate, from the great capabilities of his nature and what he performs by means of them, he may, even in his present state, not only calculate with certainty upon a second life, but also promise himself from this second life far more than from the first.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

RECONSIDERATION OF THE PRECEDING ARGUMENT.

WAS it the intrinsic weight of this argument which gave it such importance for me, or was it not rather the disposition of mind in which I discussed it?

I have been reading over what I wrote on that subject, and readily admit that the demonstration from the prodigious powers and capabilities of Man is particularly calculated to be adorned with the flowers of rhetoric. But it seems to me to be founded on more than one false position.

All that has been said concerning the non-development of the great mass of human capabilities, and the non-application of the great mass of human powers, is perfectly true, and there is no exaggeration in that part of the statement: but I am not perfectly satisfied on this point, that if the capabilities which have not arrived at their developement here are not developed in a future life, and the powers which have not been brought into action here are not employed in a future life, there is no end, or at least a most disproportionate

end for their whole existence. Is not this rather too bold a conclusion? Must the ends every where lie exposed to our view? If something has not the end for which we conceive it to be solely and alone destined, and we can therefore not discover its end, does it thence follow that it really *has* no end? In my opinion Man is yet very far behind-hand in the discovery of the ends in the arrangements of Nature.

But how, if upon closer examination an end for the human capabilities and powers that remain undeveloped and unapplied should be detected? "Human capabilities cannot exist but to be developed—human powers cannot exist but to be applied—where the former are not developed and the latter not applied, they are thrown away."—Strange conclusion! May not the non-developement and non-application be designed to produce in this particular also variety among mankind? And if there actually are numberless different degrees of non-developement and non-application; if both really differ in every individual in whom we perceive them: is it not evident that by means of them the utmost possible variety was designed to be produced?

Variety is stamped not only upon the worlds which float, by the name of stars, in boundless space, but also upon the beings in each of these worlds. Variety is stamped not only upon the different species of beings, but also upon the individual beings of each species. It must therefore have been intended that variety should be stamped upon mankind too. So it

actually is upon all sides to an inconceivable degree. On the side to which our attention is now directed, it is obvious that the groundwork for the utmost variety was furnished by means of the infinite diversity of the capabilities themselves. If, however, this, as I readily admit, is by no means sufficient to afford a complete explanation of the phenomenon that there are so very few highly perfect individuals; still we are not justified in asserting that he who has recourse to it in order to explain that phenomenon is guilty of a miserable evasion. If we admit that some are peculiarly qualified and adapted for mechanical trades, others for the arts, and others again for the sciences, we necessarily admit the variety of their capabilities. It is well known also, that absolutely nothing, or at least very little can be made of some individuals, let them receive what education they will. There is variety then already in the capabilities themselves; but this variety could ascend still higher and appear also in the developement of the capabilities. This is actually the case; and hence there are absolutely unpolished as well as highly civilized nations; hence among even the latter there are found mere mother-wit and natural understanding, as well as profound sagacity and cultivated reason; hence men in the full possession of their mental powers stop short, youths close their career in the midst of their efforts after moral perfection, children die, or are even brought dead into the world, nay, cease to exist while yet unborn. All this was requisite to increase the variety presented by the

human species. But this variety could ascend still higher ; it could manifest itself also in the application of the developed powers. This, too, actually took place, and hence some individuals have improper situations allotted to them in society, while others fill those for which they are qualified ; hence many of the latter are unsuccessful in whatever they undertake, while others succeed in all their enterprises : hence there are those whom infirmity obliges to relinquish their labours, as there are others whom health allows to exert themselves to the very last ; hence there are individuals who die in the flower of their age to the great loss of the world, as there are old men who are serviceable to it for half a century. All this too was requisite in order to carry variety to the utmost possible extent. Consider only the fate of completed works after the death of their authors. Here the most useful institution suddenly drops with its founder ; nobody will bestow time and trouble for its continuance. There another flourishes, and three patrons start up for one that it loses : after a century or two it is destroyed by a war. A third subsists for thousands of years, and all the wars in the world cannot overthrow it.

I perceive clearly then, that the non-developement of so many human capabilities and the non-application of so many human powers really have an end, namely, to produce the greatest possible variety. Nay, I perceive still more ; I perceive too that this end is so sublime that it is fully proportionate to the

means which are expended on it, and that the expenditure of these means does not in the least deserve to be termed waste. Is not all beauty dependent on variety? What else renders the appearance of Nature so beautiful? what else, too, makes mankind look beautiful? If all men had one and the same shape, stature, and physiognomy, would that have been a beautiful sight? No more would it if all men possessed the same gifts, or if all those who possess certain gifts in an eminent degree were to cultivate and apply them to the same extent. People talk, indeed, of a law of economy in Nature; but the law of variety takes the precedence of it, and if the two clash, the former is sacrificed to the latter, and must be sacrificed to it, because the works of Nature are designed to possess the highest beauty, and this cannot subsist without the greatest variety.

In my opinion, then, I have detected one false position in the preceding meditation. It seems to me, namely, to be false, to assume that, if there were no future life, the human capabilities which were there but remained undeveloped, and the human powers which were also there, but were not applied, had no end. There is still, as we have seen, an end for them and that a most sublime one.

What then would become of human society if all human capabilities were duly cultivated? In theory this notion may be truly pleasing; but in practice it would be found quite preposterous. Is it not absolutely necessary that there should be inferior classes?

Must not the lowest class be precisely the most numerous? Hundreds of thousands who, for want of cultivation, now live content with their state, would, if duly cultivated, either not enter it at all or soon quit it again—in short, they would not like to be and to remain in it. If, in like manner, all cultivated powers were duly employed, what would become of the world? Can we doubt that there are thousands who possess the powers of a Cæsar or an Alexander? How would it be if all these were to act the parts of Cæsars and Alexanders? In like manner, hundreds of thousands of subjects possess equal abilities with their sovereign. It is therefore as inexpedient as it is perhaps impracticable, that all human capabilities should be duly cultivated, and all human powers duly applied. I say also *impracticable*. If, for instance, the gift of commanding, which is possessed by almost all mankind, were to be applied by all, who would there be to obey? And if all who were born alive were to live to grow up, there must be no debilitated parents, no ignorant nurses, no infantile diseases; and for every unborn infant to come safely into the world, all mothers should be strong, healthy, and intelligent. It is all a chance whether an individual comes alive into the world, continues to live, cultivates his capabilities, and applies his powers; but all this is the lot of so many that the world has enough of them. It was not to be foreseen to whom this lot would fall, and therefore it was requisite that there should be the most prodigious abundance of capabilities and powers.

If the end of variety, in regard to so many human capabilities which remain uncultivated, and to so many human powers which remain unapplied, be invalid : I cannot see how Nature is to be justified in regard to all her other arrangements. To the assertion, that wherever we discover powers in Nature, we there see them not only operating to certain ends, but also promoting and attaining these ends, I cannot by any means subscribe. Daily experience teaches me, that throughout all Nature an immense multitude of capabilities are either not at all or but partially developed, and that in like manner an immense multitude of powers are either not at all or but partially applied. The law of variety, on the other hand, in my opinion, completely justifies Nature in this particular. She was obliged to sacrifice this law of economy, which perhaps after all may exist only in the imaginations of some of our philosophers, in order to produce every where the greatest possible beauty.

This conducts me to the second, in my opinion, false position in the last meditation, namely, that “ throughout all Nature by which Man is surrounded, absolutely nothing is lost.” If this does not mean, that every thing which otherwise neither has nor tends to the least end, yet promotes the grand universal end of Nature, the utmost possible variety, I cannot, as I have observed, coincide in it. What ! can any one seriously pretend to palm upon me as a truth the position that “ in Nature nothing is lost,”

in the sense that all capabilities are fully developed, and all powers duly applied.

What countless multitudes of insects perish in their very origin. Are the thousandth part of the eggs laid by our poultry ever hatched? Do we not destroy with every female animal that we kill the germs of a long posterity of her species? How many animals are devoured while small by us and by beasts of prey? How many fruit-buds drop from the trees? How frequently does it happen that not one in ten of the blossoms on a cherry-tree sets for fruit? and after the fruit has set, does not great part of it fall off unripe? Are not the crops both of fruit and corn often totally ruined by blights? In the vegetable kingdom, too, what immense numbers of seeds of all kinds never find their way to the earth! What innumerable plants perish in their first germination, or when they have scarcely sprung up! I have often remarked this when viewing a wood of firs raised from seed. How many of them are standing at the end of twenty or thirty years? A small number of these trees by degrees out-grow the rest. The latter die off, and yet with more space they would have thriven as well as the former. The same observation applies to the very stones, not one in ten thousand of which attains its complete developement, while the rest, being removed from their natural situation by the plough and the spade, grow no larger than they are. What would become of the earth, and what of its inhabit-

ants, if every stone were to attain the developement of which it is susceptible?

Just as the matter stands in regard to the development of the capabilities in Nature, so it does also in regard to the application of powers. How many most salubrious springs may there be, which are of no benefit to a single individual, because they are not known! What vast treasures of gold and silver may be locked up in the bosoms of mountains! How many salutary herbs flourish and fade without being applied to any use! How many fruit-trees are so injured by frosts as to bear a scanty crop of very inferior fruit! How many forests in uninhabited regions are overthrown by the hand of Time and gradually moulder into dust! What quantities of vegetables, pulse, fruit, flesh, and grain of all sorts, are spoiled even under the hands of men! How much of the superfluity of the wealthy is wasted in the strictest sense of the word! How many animals fit for food perish by disease and rot in their deserts! How many oxen, horses, camels, and elephants, run wild upon the earth, all of which might be rendered serviceable for carriage or for draught! And lastly, out of a thousand apes and bears scarcely one learns to dance; out of a thousand parrots, magpies, and starlings, scarcely one learns to talk; out of a thousand bulfinches, scarcely one learns to pipe; out of a thousand dogs, scarcely one learns to fetch and carry.

While I was stringing together and committing to

paper this series of questions and exclamations, I had often an obscure feeling as if my own better knowledge would have contradicted me. Now, upon more mature reflection the matter indeed appears in a different light. All that I have mentioned above, though it may not subserve to this or that particular end, may yet be employed for other ends, and is actually so employed. This takes place in part through our own agency. Do we not eat the eggs which we will not suffer our poultry to hatch, and the animals which we slaughter young? Do we not consume in bread, puddings, pastry, the wheat that is not sown? Do we not bake our windfalls, or press them for cyder? When a tree has ceased to produce good fruit, do we not burn it for fuel? Do we not use the small stones for paving our streets, and the very gravel in our gardens? And because *we* cannot use a thing, is it for that reason wasted? Things which are spoiled for us become on that very account fit for the consumption of other creatures. In this predicament are unripe fruit, putrid meat, the flesh of animals which die a natural death. It is inconceivable how many species of living beings, and especially insects and worms, either perfect in themselves or in their passage to a different state, subsist upon them. Not a crumb of bread that drops from our table; not a grain of corn that is shaken from the ear; not a seed of any other kind which we never think of gathering, is absolutely lost—every one of them finds a consumer. The eggs

of insects themselves feed vast multitudes of birds, which, in severe winters, when the ground is long covered with snow, would perish if Nature had not provided them with these supplies. The very blossoms which fall off and wither have added to the stores of the industrious bee; and the sheep and the deer are fond of herbs which are not in request with Man. Nay more—all other things which are of no immediate use either to man or beast, are sooner or later mediately useful to them, inasmuch as they are useful to the earth. The moss that adheres to the naked rock, becomes by its decay the creator of the first mould upon it: the dead trees of all kinds, the withered plants, the fallen blossoms, nay even the fruit-buds nipped by frost, are in like manner again converted into earth, and by their return to the soil render it richer in homogeneous particles, and thereby more fertile for similar trees and plants; and if the hand of Man ever lights upon mouldered or burned forests, and brings the soil there, as at Madeira, into cultivation, it produces immense crops of corn and fruit, and generous wine. The undiscovered salubrious springs render the same service to the earth as any other springs: the unwrought veins of gold and silver assist like other mineral strata to support the superincumbent mass; the wild beasts which do not employ their powers for the benefit of Man, use them for their own advantage; and as to the dancing of bears and the tricks of dogs, that objection scarcely deserves answering, since the torment inflicted in teaching these things is truly abominable, and Nature could never have intended

that any of her creatures should be tormented by Man.

What results from this totally different representation of the matter? Why, this—that in Nature we find a universal tendency to some end; or in other words, that out of Man, nothing, absolutely nothing is wasted, in the proper signification of the word. And, if it were otherwise, could we compare the powers and capabilities of Man with such material objects? Can we argue, that as a thousand things are stifled in their birth, the same may be the case with the human mind?—but if no part even of the material in Nature is ever lost, can it be possible that the spiritual should be? This would nevertheless clearly be the case if Man ceased to exist in death. His body, whether full-grown or yet unborn, is moreover useful in death, since it assists to enrich the soil. But none of his capabilities when he dies early, nor his mental powers when he dies old, can add to the earth a single atom. They are absolutely and truly lost if there is no existence after death. And as the material things in Nature which remain most incomplete, besides contributing to produce variety, are uniformly subservient to some other purpose, were it only to recruit and fertilize the soil: so it seems also as if that which remains incomplete in man, and which cannot add a single atom to the mass of the earth, must have some other end besides contributing to variety.

I retract, therefore, the charge not only of the second but also of the first false position in the pre-

ceding meditation. In both there is something that I cannot refute.

How, if it were then perfectly true, that not a single individual has yet cultivated his capabilities and applied his powers to that extent of which they are susceptible?—And so it really is. The assertion that the wisest can become still wiser, the best still better, the most philanthropic still more useful, and that it is impossible to calculate how far all this can be carried, is too irrefragable: I am forced to admit it. I perceive capabilities for an everlasting progression of the human mind. Such capabilities I discover no where else. All bodies have their maximum of dimension. When they have attained it they become stationary. This is the case with every stone, every tree, every animal, nay with the human body itself. By its internal constitution a limit is set to each which it cannot pass. This evidently demonstrates that they are all doomed to decay and ultimately to annihilation; for when they can no longer advance and rise, they retrograde and sink—a process that cannot but terminate in complete dissolution. The mind, on the contrary, has no limits assigned to its knowledge, its goodness, and its activity. In all these it may increase to eternity, if but its existence be eternal. Its capabilities for eternal improvement seem therefore to be capabilities for eternal duration. And if besides its instinct of eternal duration there were in it also capabilities for eternal duration—what, O what, would follow?

In good truth, if there is no future life, Man with his powers and capabilities must exactly resemble a hog-sty built on the foundation for a tower. Man himself is not to blame. He would gladly cultivate his capabilities and employ his powers as many centuries as he has been years in cultivating and employing them : but he is not permitted. What is he to think ? If his body still possessed the power of digesting, of preparing chyle, and keeping the blood in circulation, his body would certainly subsist longer : now he himself still possesses power to think, to will and to act, and shall he not continue to exist, not eternally continue to exist, since he possesses the power to think, to will and to act eternally ? Let him have received this power from what quarter he may, must we not conclude that, as in the gift of merely *finite* powers to his body, it was decreed that his body should exist but for a time ; so the gift of *infinite* powers to the human mind involves this promise to the human mind : *Thou shalt exist for ever ?*

In short, I must almost begin to believe that Man is destined for another life ; otherwise he would appear to be in contradiction not only with himself, but with all Nature around him. He stands alone as a deviation from and exception to the general constitution of beings : is it not more rational to believe that he is so on account of his duration, than on account of the disproportion of his powers ? In the former case he would be a monument of supreme wisdom ; but what would he be in the latter ?

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

FIFTH ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE STATE.

AFTER having thrice read over the foregoing with attention, I adhere to the conclusion which at last I drew from it.

One question indeed yet remains to be answered, and that is, what would become of human society, if all the human capabilities were duly cultivated, and all the human powers duly applied ; whence it is inferred that both would be as inexpedient as they are perhaps impracticable. It may be that this did not take place, because it would have been inexpedient in the present state of human society : nay it may be that what is now impracticable must be for ever impracticable ; and what is now inexpedient for human society must be for ever inexpedient. But ought we not, when we become intimately acquainted with the sublimity of the human faculties and powers, rather to draw from them a contrary conclusion ?—ought we not to infer that some time or other it must be practicable, and that human society must some time or other assume such a form that it would even be expedient

for it ? Here is no question whatever concerning the abuse of powers : so that there is no occasion to cite the Cæsars and the Alexanders. Mankind would at all events have been more happy, had there never been a Cæsar or an Alexander.—But to proceed to the next argument in favour of a future state.

With the noble faculties possessed by Man is combined an insatiable desire to improve them more and more by cultivation, and this desire of perfection is equally strong with the desire of immortality. The wise man is not only capable of becoming wiser, and the good man better every day, but both earnestly endeavour to become so. It is a most gratifying sight to see how they strive to make incessant advances in useful knowledge and in virtue. When the desire and the faculty harmonize so well, how is it possible that they need fear being cut off by death in the midst of their career, and annihilated together with all their wisdom and all their virtue ? Are they not on the contrary authorized to believe with confidence, that, because a future state after death has intrinsic possibility, as they have the capability and the will to advance for ever in the acquisition of knowledge and in active virtue, so they shall continue for ever to make progressive advances in them ? In fact, the more deeply we reflect on the destination of Man, the more perfect appears the harmony of his system, if he continues to exist in death ; and the more contradictory his whole nature, and the more insoluble a problem is he to himself, if death is attended with annihilation.

This sounds well, to be sure :—but in this sort of argument is it not tacitly assumed that the instinct of the progressive cultivation of the noble faculties of Man is general ? Where is it so ?—Any one who had not yet been in the world and should enter it after this delineation, could not but believe that he was entering a society composed entirely of persons insatiably desirous of knowledge and indefatigable in doing good : but how soon would he be compelled to descend from these lofty notions ! For innumerable individuals the higher branches of human knowledge have no charms whatever ; innumerable others are slaves to their lusts, or confine their ideas of virtue to that degree of common honesty which places them out of the reach of the law. Many, even of those who devote themselves to the sciences, cultivate them merely as the means of subsistence, and stop short as soon as they have through them obtained a competence. In like manner, many of those who are called good men are good no longer than while they can derive advantage from being so. That lofty delineation of man then is evidently applicable to but very few ; and the desire of becoming continually wiser and better manifests itself in a very inconsiderable portion of the human race. Instead therefore of classing this among the natural instincts, it may most justly be numbered among the artificial, to which, as already observed, no gratification has been promised.

This melancholy picture of mankind is unfortunately not wholly destitute of truth ; but in my

opinion it makes no alteration in the state of the case. Here it is not the question what men in general are, but what they in general might be and ought to be. The truly wise and virtuous furnish the model of this in reality, and from them the nature of mankind must be deduced. Neither must the picture of Man be exaggerated on the one side any more than on the other. Untrue as it is that all men are wise and virtuous, so untrue is it that the number of the wise and virtuous is so extremely small. To assert the former is merely telling an untruth ; to assert the latter is to be guilty at once of untruth and injustice : to maintain the former is but venial enthusiasm, excessive benevolence ; to maintain the latter is slander and misanthropy. There are still, God be thanked, men of talents and integrity in all classes, who delight in the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of virtue, and who for that very reason strive to enlarge the sphere of both. We must only not circumscribe our notion of wisdom within too narrow a compass, nor overstrain that of virtue. If, to be sure, the moral philosopher will not admit any but those who pursue his own science to be entitled to the epithet of wise ; if the mathematician and the astronomer make the same exception ; then indeed the number of the wise will be small. Where then is this standard of wisdom fixed, and when have mankind acknowledged it to be the only correct one ? A man may be wise without being precisely a Newton, a Des Cartes, an Euler, or a Herschel. Accurate ideas on

the truths and subjects most important to mankind, and the knowledge connected with the conduct of life, are perhaps the height of wisdom ; and in like manner not only is he a virtuous man who dies for the community, but also every one who lives for it. The latter is often more serviceable to society by his life, than the former by his death. Of what benefit to it is, for example, the death of so many thousands who have fallen in indecisive skirmishes ? Neither is it requisite, in order to live for society, to fill a lofty station and to fill it properly ; it is possible even in the lowest class of all to be a very useful and consequently a very good man.

And why have the higher branches of human knowledge no charms for innumerable individuals ? Why are innumerable others mere slaves to their lusts ? Is it not wholly and solely owing to this—that they did not receive such an education as duly cultivated their reason, and that, left to themselves, they fell into gross sensuality, which, as the property of animal natures, is best suited to men who remain almost wholly animal. They perhaps received a somewhat superior but yet not perfect education, who, when they obtain a competence, relinquish the science by which it was gained ; and those who do good no longer than while they derive some temporal advantages from it. Reason must indeed be cultivated in a considerable degree before the desire of truth and virtue awakes and becomes insatiable : but this desire is no more an artificial impulse than the longing after im-

mortality, because it arises immediately from the cultivation of reason, and Man is destined to cultivate his reason. How then is it possible to come to such a conclusion as this :—" Because the desire to advance for ever in wisdom and virtue does not exist in all mankind, it affords to those in whom it does exist no guarantee for its everlasting gratification !" —Would it not be much more correct to argue *thus* :—" Because this desire springs immediately from the cultivation of reason, and every man is endowed with reason in order that he may cultivate it, those who here remain stupid and vicious must in the next life also be behind the wise and the virtuous ?"

But how, if this so much vaunted desire of perfection in the wise and the good were nothing more than that instinct which impels mankind in general to keep advancing in all things ; and if both merely differed like genus and species. What else is insatiable ambition than the incessant desire of more ? What is the increasing fondness for expense but the same desire ? Is not the adventurer continually becoming more daring ? Are not the swindler and the robber always devising means to surpass their former achievements ? It is every where the same impulse, *keep advancing* !—only under different forms, according to the circumstances to which it is directed. The one directs it to possessions and money, a second to honours, a third to knavery, and a fourth to wisdom and virtue. As the philosopher cannot discover established truths enough, so the old gossip can never hear

scandal enough. As the philanthropist can never do good enough, so the miser can never scrape together money enough. As he who is fond of life cannot live long enough, so he who is weary of life cannot get rid of it soon enough. As the virtuous man knows no limits for his virtue, neither does the villain for his wickedness. Should you not then rather draw this inference :—" As the miser cannot here gratify his insatiable desire for money, there must be a life after death, in which he will gratify it"—or—" Because the rogue, according to his ideas, is not subtle enough here in his knaveries, there must be a life after death in which he shall carry them to the highest pitch of perfection?"

What inferences ! Is it decorous, in discussing so grave a matter as the destination of man, to indulge in such ? But—if it is : the very insatiability of avarice and ambition, the very increasing knavery of the swindler, upon the general principle, that they are nothing but the impulse *Onward!* only differently modified and directed, guarantee the destination of man to immortality ; in the same manner as the insatiable thirst of the wise for superior wisdom and the indefatigable aspiring of the virtuous after superior virtue. It is true, that because the miser cannot here fully gratify his desire of money, there must be another life after death ; it is true, that because the swindler cannot here fully gratify his knavish disposition, there must be another life after death ; but it is indecorous to infer that in this life after death the one will fully

gratify his avarice and the other his knavery. These are perversions of the sublime instinct of Man—the instinct of perfectibility ; but the longing after mere wisdom and the aspiring after more virtue are its true, its essentially human directions, and it is in such only that the instinct of perfection can reckon upon complete gratification ; for it cannot possibly be given to Man in order to make his imperfection perfect. And—consider only what pains it requires to become wise—what self-denial to become virtuous !

“ O yes, and what pains it costs also to acquire wealth, what efforts to gain distinction !”

Certainly : but there are some who are born rich and illustrious ;—did you ever hear of people who were born wise, or who have been heroes of virtue from their cradles ?

“ It is not easier to be a villain than a saint ; it is as difficult to act the perfect fool as to be a philosopher.”

This is in fact applicable to particular cases only. To act the perfect fool, on the stage for instance, may be difficult ; but to be a perfect fool is the easiest matter in the world. A person need only not learn any thing, and he is sure of succeeding. In like manner it is no doubt difficult to learn to be what is called a conjuror or juggler ; but, in order to be a worthless and vicious man, all that a person need do is to give himself up to his sensual appetites. If we would derive honour from the pains we take, those pains must be bestowed on a worthy object. The more pains and

industry we bestow on useless things and buffooneries, the more contemptible we thereby render ourselves ; and the more heinous the wickedness, the more detestable the heart that can practise it. Wisdom and virtue then are alone useful—wisdom and virtue are alone honourable.

Now consider the philosopher, the man of science, the enquirer after truth—how closely he applies himself to study and meditation ! How many social pleasures he cheerfully foregoes, that he may not be disturbed in his aspirations after knowledge ! How many nights he watches, that from individual truths he may arrive at a connected system of truth ! It is scarcely possible to believe that incessant meditation is not more arduous than incessant amusement. It is scarcely possible to believe that it is not easier to sleep than to devote the hours of rest to unwearied study. Consider in like manner the indefatigable philanthropist, the man who sacrifices himself for justice and innocence—does it cost him nothing to adhere faithfully to his principles ? Does it cost him nothing to renounce his private interest which he might gratify with little trouble, and to vanquish passions by which thousands suffer themselves to be conquered and enslaved ?

“ Who bids them act thus ? If it is more arduous to be a philosopher than no philosopher, a saint than no saint, abstain from the pursuit of wisdom and virtue ; or look not for any compensation for the pains

which the one and the efforts which the other costs you."

Here the matter seems to me to be approaching to a crisis. All now depends on the question: *Is Man destined to be wise and good, or not?* I owe it to myself to discuss this question more fully than I have yet done.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING ARGUMENT.

IF indeed Man were to undertake any thing beyond or contrary to his destination, he would punish himself and he would have none to blame but himself for the misery which would thence ensue. But who shall determine what is his destination? Who has a right to decide this point?—who indeed can pronounce such a decision as shall not be liable to objection? Diogenes perhaps, or Rousseau, or some other heretic in the doctrine of Man, who would fain make Esquimaux or New Zealanders of us? By whom has he been authorized to do so?

No, nothing but the nature of Man itself, his condition, constitution and whole situation, can determine the destination of Man. He is surrounded by a vast world fraught with the materials of knowledge for him; he possesses the power of collecting these materials and *he alone*. All these materials would be there absolutely to no purpose, were *he* to leave them uncollected. The grains of corn indeed would be sought

after, but not the stars in the firmament. Scarcely has he exercised for a time his inferior knowing faculty when the higher awakes. He forms general conceptions, determines by them the relations of things that are exposed to his view, discovers by means of them hidden relations, draws inferences, links together series of conclusions, and thereby raises himself to what may be properly denominated science. Not till then is he enabled to take a comprehensive view of the objects around him; not till then does he discern the order, the beauty, and the perfection of the universe. As these would have remained wholly unobserved and unadmired had *he* not observed and admired them, so is he capable of continuing to admire them more and more. His consciousness calls him back at times from the universe to himself. He learns to distinguish himself clearly from other things, attains to a conception of his mind, feels the importance of investigating the relation in which the external world stands to himself, considers how to make it more and more useful to him, and is thus obliged to penetrate deeper and deeper into the objects themselves, their powers, and connexions. Consequently, he is destined to the acquisition of knowledge, and wisdom is his vocation.

Not wisdom alone, but virtue also, is his vocation. No sooner has he become an admirer of the perfection of the world, than he feels that he must not remain behind the world in perfection. He feels that in his sentiments and actions there ought to be the same

harmony as in all the operations of Nature around him. He feels that by the cultivation of his moral essence he is to crown the beauty of all Nature. The knowledge of the relations of the external world to himself teaches him at once the duties he owes it; and these he, as a part of the whole, must make it a law most sacredly to fulfil.

I have read over again this evidence, that Man is destined to wisdom and virtue, to see whether any link is wanting in the chain, but I find it perfect and complete. This being the case, it holds good, and that so much the more because it is suited to every capacity.

To the question then—Who bids Man to be wise and good, if wisdom costs him such pains, and virtue such sacrifices?—the answer is—His nature. Now it is obvious that every being besides him follows the instincts of its nature, without even knowing what it does; and he, the only being endowed with reason, is he not to follow the instincts of his? What an incongruous creature would he be in this case again! Admitting however, that Man ceases to exist when he dies, for what purpose has he become wise and virtuous? For what purpose has he amassed such a store of liberal knowledge and generous sentiments? What has been the object of the cultivation of his rational and moral essence? Has he then been obliged to cultivate himself merely to be at last annihilated?

“ But—is not the whole material world in the same predicament? Does not every thing develope itself merely to be at last annihilated?”

To this objection it may be justly replied—The whole material world cannot have any other fate; it has intrinsic impossibility of everlasting duration. The mind of Man on the contrary can have another fate, and it is possible that it may continue to exist after the dissolution of the body; why then shall it not embrace with confidence the belief in its future existence? And besides—what is annihilation in the material world? Nothing but the annihilation of the forms: the mass remains and is employed again for other forms. But the knowledge and virtue of Man are in the strictest sense annihilated, if he ceases to exist in death; for knowledge is not a property of his mouldering flesh, neither is virtue inherent in his bones. Both, when they are reduced to dust, pass over into other bodies; and if they afterwards contribute again to the composition of a human body, the spirit which inhabits it must begin again, like the first, to collect knowledge and virtue. To what end then the store of high conceptions and generous sentiments collected by any mortal? Every other store that Man amasses is of benefit to somebody after his death. Nay, even the store of earth which he has collected in his body is again of benefit to the earth. But whom shall his knowledge and virtuous dispositions benefit after his death, unless they then prove beneficial to himself?

Shall each of his general conceptions return to the individual things from which he derived it? and each of his moral conclusions to the propositions from which he formed it? None but he can make use of his wisdom and virtue, none but he can appropriate the smallest portion of them to himself. They can but remain his property and his alone; or, in other words, he must himself remain.

“Has not then the wise man employed and benefited by his wisdom, and the upright man by his integrity, as long as he lived? Have they not been productive of benefit and happiness to them on all sides? With this then they must be content. They have felt happy through them so long as they existed, and thus the aim of both is attained.”

It is true, the wise man derives high gratification from the possession of his knowledge, from his progressive advance in it, and from its application. In like manner he enjoys, from the consciousness that he surpasses the great mass of mankind in virtue and the performance of noble actions, the most exquisite delight. But for this very reason there arises within him the most ardent desire to enjoy still longer—to enjoy for ever—those gratifications of wisdom and those delights of virtue. There is not in his nature any intrinsic contradiction to this desire; on the contrary there is intrinsic possibility of its being gratified. Is he, who so earnestly desires to continue for ever to cultivate his noble faculties, not authorised to anticipate the gratification of his wish? Has he not a

right to found this anticipation on the congruity of his nature, which must absolutely be, because there is congruity in the nature of all other beings ?

And then—is the possession of his wisdom and virtue really so undisturbed, are the delights which he derives from them really so pure, as to be recompense sufficient for the zeal and perseverance with which he acquired them ? Are they recompense sufficient for so many thousand self-denials which he practises for their sake ? How often does he involuntarily tire in his researches after truth, and is obliged to suspend them ! How often bodily affliction or dejection of mind render him less fit for their pursuit ! How often is he interrupted by strong sensible impressions, to which he is forced against his will to submit ! His attention is divided ; he drops the thread of his ideas, or loses the accurate view of their succession ; an undemonstrated idea creeps in among them, and he draws false conclusions, like an arithmetician who has blundered in his calculations. But should he meet with none of these impediments, should he be healthy and cheerful and undisturbed enough to prosecute his meditations, he soon arrives, to his extreme mortification, first here, then there, at the limits of light and certainty. There he stands and sighs. If he ventures beyond these limits, he enters the region of mere probability, with which he must be content, or the land of hypothesis, where treacherous meteors lead him astray. Feeling himself called to the discovery of Truth, he strives to arrive at Truth ; but in the midst

of his efforts, it seems as if she were merely making game of him ; as if she first enticed him to her with a promise to reveal herself to him, then retired from him as fast as he approached her, and at last wholly withdrew herself from his sight.—Must not this evident vocation of man to truth on the one hand, and this impossibility of completely attaining truth on the other, involve a tacit promise that in a future higher state he shall certainly arrive at it ? As this promise is the strongest encouragement for him to pursue his inquiries, and his only consolation when he finds himself baffled in his efforts, may he not confidently hope for its fulfilment ?

In like manner, how often is the virtuous man disturbed in the enjoyment of his goodness by the consciousness of the frailties that still adhere to his nature ! How often is he overtaken by an impetuous desire, that deranges the equipoise of his heart, which he fondly deemed immoveable ! How often is he interrupted by others, sometimes by enemies, sometimes even by friends, at least in the fulness of the enjoyment of himself ! How often does he incur the censure of the world for his noblest sentiments, judgments, and counsels ! How often does bodily suffering affect the serenity of his mind ! How rarely are his noblest actions crowned with success ! Sometimes circumstances are not suited to them ; sometimes he meets with an unworthy object ; sometimes he is thwarted by a villain, to whose plans they run counter ; sometimes

they are not so beneficial as he expected ; nay, sometimes they affright him by the mischief which through some accident they occasion. Must not in like manner the evident vocation of Man to virtue on the one hand, and the impossibility of completely possessing, enjoying, and applying virtue on the other, involve a tacit promise that in a future higher state he shall certainly arrive at it ? As this promise is the strongest encouragement to perseverance in virtue, and the only consolation for him when his best actions miscarry, may he not reckon without the slightest doubt upon its fulfilment ?

If not, it would admit of a question whether Man acts wisely in seeking to become wise, and whether he acts rightly in striving to become virtuous. Is he then merely destined for wisdom and virtue, and not, like all other beings, for happiness also ? Surely not ; only in his case there has been made this exception, that he is susceptible of a two-fold happiness, an internal and an external. If he were never completely to attain the former, if even the useless striving after it were frequently to deprive him of the latter, what measures ought he to adopt ? To attain external happiness he need not be very wise and still less very virtuous. A very small degree of reason, which he would acquire without trouble, merely by living from childhood in society, would suffice for this purpose ; and he need but feign goodness of heart, like our Pharisees, who under the cloak of virtue grasp at

every pleasure of life, and nevertheless enjoy the external benefit of virtue. Do not these perform in fact the most lucrative part?

This must indeed be obvious to every one who reflects on life and the enjoyment of life; and it was this very thing which so strongly excited me to satisfy myself respecting that momentous subject, the destination of Man, that I might be able to form a right plan for my brief terrestrial career. When I then consider our sensualists who, unconcerned about all higher knowledge, pass their lives in a continued round of pleasures; who deign to bestow no farther thought on Nature than so far as regards the weather or their various crops; who pay little attention to their duties, perform them at most but superficially, or even keep others to perform them in their stead; who, on the other hand, exert all their ingenuity to devise and vary the enjoyments of sense; who sometimes eat, at others drink, sleep, gamble, dance, hunt; who pursue this course year after year and to the very end of their lives—are not these the wisest men, if their existence terminates in death? If it is not possible to exist any longer, does not he act most judiciously who enjoys that which is as fully as he can? It is of no use to object that Man is not merely a sensible, but also a moral being, and that it is therefore his duty, even though he were annihilated in death, to cultivate his moral nature as much as possible, because every other being besides him, if it is allowed time, cultivates itself as highly as it can. Man, however, has just as good

a right to happiness as all other beings; and if the cultivation of his moral nature affords him no perfect happiness, and even deprives him of the sensual which he might enjoy in full measure, who is there to impose it on him as a duty? I should, on the contrary, be inclined to believe, that it is precisely his moral nature which furnishes the strongest argument for his existence after death. What! a being which penetrates the eternal laws of Nature, on whom they are in a manner essentially impressed, and who is capable of imitating them, not be indestructible, eternal, as those laws themselves?

If, however, there is another life after death, then is the course pursued by these sensualists most perverse and preposterous. They then cultivate precisely that nature in them which is subject to destruction and wholly neglect that which alone will last for ever. Most sincerely do I rejoice that I have entered upon this investigation. Soon, very soon, my plan of life will be formed. I now consider it as almost impossible that I should ever join the ranks of those who live solely for sensual gratifications. It seems to me much more probable that I shall continue to exist after death than that I shall not. This new argument that I have just been discussing has made a very strong impression upon me. Which position deserves the preference—that a being which is capable of advancing to eternity in wisdom and virtue; which has internal and external possibility of doing so; which longs and cannot help longing to make eternal

advances in both—that this being shall, in the midst of its course, or when it has proceeded but a very little way, be suddenly and cruelly stopped, and, as it were, for a punishment for striving to be wise and good, be deprived of existence altogether : or, that it shall here, agreeably to its faculties and wishes, acquire only the first rudiments of wisdom, make only its first essays in virtue, and then, as a reward for having done so, be removed to a higher state, where it shall allay its thirst of wisdom, gratify its desire of being perfectly virtuous, find a sphere opened for it in which it shall exert the utmost activity, in which its operations shall be completely successful, and in which it shall feel inexpressibly happy in the beneficial results of its activity—once more, which of these positions deserves the preference, the latter or the former ? By my reason, I swear, the latter !

With this idea I will repair to the grave of my father. The evening is so calm, so serene ; my heart serene and calm as the evening—delight for me within and without !

O father ! father ! never yet did I feel such tranquil delight at this hallowed spot as at this moment. Dost thou, O father, really continue to live—to live in loftier regions—in regions of light and perfection ? If so, O appear to me here in the still twilight of this serene evening—here, at this to me so sacred spot, where thy bones are mouldering into dust ! Appear to me but for a moment and give me positive

proof of a future state for Man. The illustrious Nazarite, indeed, once said, that whoever should not believe Moses and the Prophets, would not believe though one should appear to him from the dead. But the question then was concerning repentance, and not concerning the belief of a future life: for long might one listen to Moses and the Prophets, without hearing one word from them on that momentous subject. Besides, I do listen to Moses and the Prophets, in the proper signification—I listen to Reason, which alone could render Moses and the Prophets worth listening to, if they were to speak. It is the voice of Reason to which I have listened, that has brought me so far as to find probability in a future state; thy appearance then, O my father, would bring me to certainty on that point.

But—what do I ask of thee? Thou canst not appear to me even if thou dost continue to exist. In this case thou art no longer on the same planet with me. The falling-off of thy earthly garment enabled thee to take thy flight from the earth; in order to sink to it again thou must be enabled to re-assume a gross body like that which thou hast quitted. And shouldst thou even show thyself to me, and should I at the moment believe that I had obtained the strongest evidence in favour of a future state, would this appear to me to-morrow upon cooler reflection as any evidence at all? Should I not, nay, must I not consider thy appearance as a mere illusion of my imagination? Should I be disposed to assert that, because

thou appearedst to me at the moment when I had called thee, thy appearance must have been something real : this very coincidence would furnish the strongest proof that, at the moment when my imagination was most active, its strongest effect, the effect that I believed I saw thee, must be produced.

Well then, father, if thou canst not appear to me, but continuest to exist, act at least from thy world upon me in mine ! When, for instance, I pursue my examination of the arguments in behalf of a future state, cause me to be duly sensible of their force !

But thou canst not do this either. Impossible as it is to travel from one world to another, so impossible is it to exercise an influence from one world upon another. Thou canst not even know that I am now preferring such a request to thee.

For what purpose then did I come to thy grave ? What do I seek—what do I expect here ? Nothing, but that the thought of thee, who wast so wise and so virtuous, and who becamest so by thy belief in a future state—this thought, which can no where affect me so powerfully as here where thy beloved remains are deposited—that this thought of thee may animate me with fresh zeal to prosecute my meditations. Reason, which alone must decide, will certainly fix my belief without thy appearance and thy influence ; and all its farther arguments will make that impression on me which they can and ought to make.

Thou, my father, pursuedst a different course from what I have taken. I have even ventured to quit the

way along which thou hadst conducted me. Forgive me, it was not my fault. Perhaps, however, both ways may meet at last, and then thy son will in thine eyes have more honour from his belief than thou from thine. I am now not far from the goal of thy faith ; I may perhaps arrive at it in a few days. Then, as Christ was to thee, so wisdom and virtue shall be to me, my life, my death, my gain. Then will I prepare myself in the most worthy manner for the great change of worlds ; in the most worthy manner I will prepare to follow thee, to rejoin thee, and to live with thee for ever !

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

SIXTH ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE STATE.

YES, now I clearly perceive what I yesterday suspected, that I should to-day be obliged to consider any apparition of my father that might have manifested itself to me at his grave as nothing more or less than a mere phantom of my imagination. Let me then calmly pursue my enquiries.

That Man is called to virtue has been already demonstrated; but another evidence in favour of this proposition may be adduced. Man lives continually in the society of his kind. If it did not occur to him to cultivate himself as Man, which however could not be the case, still the wild beasts would compel him to do so. We, who have lived for hundreds and thousands of years in society, have to be sure no conception of men being compelled by the brutes to associate together: but all those who settle in a country previously uninhabited find themselves in this predicament. They are lost unless they unite. And if we are no longer compelled by the wild beasts to live con-

tinually in society, how could the propagation of our species go on without it? Men are not like the caterpillars, which are hatched by the sun, or like the chick which picks up the groats as soon as it is out of the shell, or like any of those animals which at the expiration of a year have no need of their parents. How much longer the human young want the care and protection of theirs! Thus domestic society immediately follows the association which men are compelled to form by the brutes. In this little society spring up various relations, in the equipoise of which solely and alone consists the happiness of those who live in it. Children stand in relation to their parents as persons needing help to helpers and *vice versa*. If parents do not help the children, the children are lost; and if the children do not suffer themselves to be helped by the parents, that is, obey them, both parents and children are lost. Here then are social duties on a small scale, that is domestic duties, and on their mutual fulfilment all domestic happiness depends. The increasing number of small domestic societies gradually approach nearer to one another and form a larger community. Each family is a state in miniature, and each state a family on an enlarged scale. There now arise new relations, the equipoise of which also constitutes all the happiness of the larger civil community. Unless its members act consistently with these relations, the whole state is miserable; and thus arise public duties, on the mutual fulfilment of which all public prosperity depends.

The fulfilment of all these social duties, domestic and public, is called—*virtue*. If Man is compelled, in the first place, by the brutes to the constant association with his kind, and in the next by the instinct of procreation to live in domestic society, and by circumstances naturally arising out of these to form civil communities—how can it admit of a doubt that his vocation is the vocation to virtue? What would become of domestic, what of public society, were not their members to act consistently with their relations to each other—that is—to fulfil their respective duties?

Many of these duties indeed are rendered light by Nature, by voluntary kindness, by affection and friendship, and by favouring circumstances; but there are others which neither Nature, nor affection, nor friendship, tends to alleviate, nay, the violation of which circumstances even render convenient. What is there to determine Man nevertheless to fulfil them? As a rational being he perceives that social life is a tacit compact. Every compact presupposes reciprocal duties. Why should he fulfil his, if others neglect to fulfil theirs towards him? At any rate it is in this case more convenient for him to violate his duties also. What is to prevent his doing so, if he must not believe in an hereafter? What?

“The idea that he is a moral being; that he ought to act consistently with his moral nature, and to find in the consciousness of having done so his reward and compensation for all the losses which may thence

accrue ; the idea, that he must regulate his mode of acting, not by the probable consequences of his actions, but by his inward obligation to perform them : the idea that he must do good, because it is good, without calculating whether it is good for himself or not."

All this sounds heroically beautiful forsooth ! But is it not demanding infinitely too much of the great majority of mankind to expect them merely to rise to the level of such ideas ? For this are required a highly cultivated understanding, and an extremely delicate moral feeling ; both which are results of a perfect education alone. But how are the great multitude educated ? Do they learn to apply their understanding to any thing but the objects around them, which belong to their future extremely contracted sphere and to their future extremely grovelling mode of life ? And—what sort of moral instruction does an individual of this class receive ? He grows up among persons who abandon themselves to the grossest passions ; the first and the most impressive education, the education by example, which he receives, is horrible. By the time that he is ten years old, he is as depraved as those from whom he sprung. How is the oral instruction of the teacher afterwards to take from the heart those tendencies which the far more efficacious instruction by deeds have already imparted to it ? And what sort of instruction again does one of the multitude receive from his teachers ? Morality is scarcely ever thought of. They beat into him unprofitable religious dogmas—which he merely learns by rote ; they

condemn good works, but give him the ten commandments, telling him at the same time that he cannot fulfil them, and comforting him on this account with the perfect merit of Christ who has fulfilled the law in his stead. Are not innumerable individuals educated in this manner even at the present day? How can we desire of all these that they should find the smallest—I will not say the strongest—impulse to what is good in representations for which they have no feeling whatever, in representations of their moral nature and of the internal obligation to virtue!

Nay more—The thousands and tens of thousands who have been thus educated are afterwards thrown into trades and professions, in which they are obliged from morning till night, and day after day, to drudge at bodily labour, and in general severe labour, in order to earn a scanty subsistence. Their minds moreover are thereby depressed, and first lose the power and then the inclination to elevate themselves to the consideration of their higher nature. Neither indeed have they time for this. Their toilsome occupations completely blunt the yet remaining moral sense. The sight of those who possess immoderately too much, while they have too little and can scarcely preserve life, renders them discontented, envious, fraudulent, and not a thought of doing good ever enters their minds unless they are paid for it. Those who without this inducement are virtuous comparatively with the others are so merely because the hope of a better life, in which they shall be rewarded for their virtue, supports them; and the

very wicked are deterred from extreme wickedness merely by the fear of punishment in the next world. Reward and punishment from without are the only motives which determine their actions.

If then the belief in a future life were taken away, numberless individuals would no longer have any motive to do good that would not be rewarded, or to abstain from wickedness that would not be punished. What would then become of human society? All these persons, when they had nothing more either to hope or to fear, would seek rightfully or wrongfully to obtain as large a share as possible of sensual pleasures and of temporal prosperity. All social relations would be of course destroyed; universal confusion would ensue, and the philosopher who knew so little of the human mind as to cause this mischief by overthrowing the belief in eternity, would not be able to restore order by all his sublime declamations on the dignity of human nature and the obligation of man to virtue. A doctrine therefore on which the well-being of human society manifestly depends must be true; or here again there would be a prodigious incongruity in the state of Man. He would be evidently destined for society, and in society he would find his ruin.

“Is this argument really of such weight as it appears to be? Must a doctrine be intrinsically true, because thousands and tens of thousands, merely inasmuch as they have been badly educated and afterwards find themselves in such wretched circumstances, need it in order to be virtuous? Indeed, if their superiors will

not provide for their better education and the improvement of their condition, it is absolutely necessary that a doctrine of this kind should be preached to them for the purpose of keeping them under due restraint : and if they take it upon trust it is well. But give them a better education, render their condition more comfortable, and they will not need the doctrine of a future state, but do what is right, from obedience to the law of reason, from a sense of duty, and from a living conviction of their internal obligation to do so."

This proposal is liable to one grand objection, namely, that it is impracticable. What can they be thinking of by whom it is brought forward ? It is indeed a truth, a lamentable truth, that too little has yet been done for the education of the lower classes, and that the deficiency might easily be supplied. The influence of the improved system of education adopted in the course of the past century has yet extended only to the higher and middling classes. But still, to give the lower classes *such* an education as shall instil into them that delicate and correct moral feeling which is requisite, if they are to do what is right merely from internal obligation and obedience to the law of reason, is absolutely impossible.

How is this education to be provided ?—Improved public schools effect much ; but they could not to all eternity accomplish so much as would be required in this case. Before children are sent to school their morals have been corrupted at home ; and let their

teacher—afterwards sow ever so good moral seed, as soon as they leave the school this seed is choked by the weeds of the bad example set them anew by their parents. There ought therefore to be public institutions, where children should not merely receive scholastic instruction, but where they should constantly reside—institutions in which they should be placed, not as soon as they were old enough to take lessons, but as soon as they were born. In short, all connexion between them and their parents must cease at their birth. Is this scheme practicable in populous states? Nay, if it even were practicable, is it not repugnant to humanity? Consequently, the present generation must retain its share in the education of the rising generation in the lowest classes, and so long as this is the case, a perfect education for the mass of the people is totally out of the question. The present generation must first be reformed, if it shall bring up a better; and how is this reform to be effected? What then can our philosophers, who propose such plans, be thinking of? It is absolutely impossible to raise mankind in general so much as that they should acquire that refined sense of moral goodness which must exist if this shall solely and alone produce universal virtue.

And supposing all men could be so raised, what would be the natural result of this? The total overthrow of society. Would men, thus refined, feel disposed to remain in the 'lowest classes? How would this delicate moral feeling accord with laborious, mean

and gross occupations? This kind of work must nevertheless be done; and if society shall subsist, there is much more hard work to be done than light. There must therefore not only be lower classes, but they must be the most numerous of any. If the multitude, refined to the degree here contemplated, were driven by force or by necessity into the lower classes, it would soon lose there the finer feelings which it had acquired. It is certainly true that more might be done for the improvement of the condition of the lower classes: but to place the people of those classes in such a situation as to retain the fine moral feeling which our philosophers pretend to possess, and which is actually requisite if it shall be incitement enough to virtue, is absolutely impossible; or you would metamorphose the lower classes into upper.

It is not then owing to chance, or solely to circumstances which might be altered, but to the nature of the thing, to the nature of civil society itself, that by far the smaller number of mankind elevate themselves to so high a sense of duty as to render all other incitements to virtue superfluous. If this then is a demonstrated truth, and if on the one hand men are destined to society, and in society can be happy through virtue alone, but if on the other the multitude would not be virtuous if there were no existence after death; this argument is of great weight, and, when added to the preceding evidences, it certainly raises the probability of the existence of Man after death to a still higher step.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE SAME ARGUMENT.

It may further be justly asked, whether the sense of duty has ever been so cultivated in any human soul, or is capable of being so cultivated, as to suffice to keep men virtuous in all circumstances of life.

This question cannot fail to offend those who maintain the affirmative; for, in asserting the sufficiency of the sense of duty for virtue, they intimate that with *them* it suffices for that purpose: otherwise it would be extraordinary that they should require of others what they are not capable of themselves. They assert it therefore of *themselves*, not in direct terms, but by implication. Of course then we scandalize them by the unexpected question, but we must not mind that. Man has indeed no occasion to make himself out to be worse than he is; neither need he consider that as an imputation in which there is no imputation.

The question—What compensation shall I receive

for it?—when we have to perform an arduous duty, is natural to all men; and we need not pry into the hearts of philosophers, who take it amiss that they too should be suspected of putting to themselves this very human question: a very superficial observation of them will convince us that this question is put by them also at the proper time. Neither can it be taken at all amiss of a virtuous man. The wise Nazarene did not take it amiss of his disciples, but thought it right to answer it, and he answered it in a very satisfactory manner. Nay, he himself, the great man, whose sense of duty had been cultivated to the utmost, had also his moments when he must have asked himself—*What compensation shall I receive for it?* Besides the thought “That I may do as my Father hath commanded me”—his soul dwelt also on this idea—“I have glorified thee, O Father! now glorify thou me!” And it was chiefly the latter idea that supported him under the last dreadful trial, when the most painful bodily sufferings did not permit the former to operate with sufficient force. In his prayer, for example, by which he consecrated himself to his departure, he communed much with himself concerning the glory which awaited him hereafter for his ignominious death: how much more may not his mind have been engaged with it in the hour of death itself! Had any one then said to him:—“Thy virtue then gains nothing by thy death; thou diest only according to law, but not virtuously; for thou hast to do with *hope*, and that is a motive by which nothing virtuous can ever be accomplished”—

he might justly have replied :—" Go and suffer thyself what I do, thou who requirest of man what is super-human ! When thou art suffering like me, thou wilt find, as I do, thy high-sounding distinction to be mere bombast. Be assured that I have attained the utmost height to which Man is capable of rising !"

Hence it is obvious that there are certain situations in life where the sense of duty, though ever so highly cultivated, is not sufficient to keep Man virtuous, so virtuous as that he should not relax. When, for instance, a person is always misrepresented on account of his most generous actions ; when those for whom they are performed always repay him with increasing ingratitude—might not this very naturally make such an impression upon him as at length to cause him to desist ? If a man, whose enemies incessantly persecute him, so that for twenty or thirty years he has not had one peaceful moment, and has no reason to hope for one during the remainder of his life, is unexpectedly furnished with an opportunity of revenging himself on them in such a manner as to insure his future repose—should he not believe that he ought to consider this opportunity as a mean of deliverance presented to him by Fate itself ? If any one who, from tenderness of conscience, abstains from an illicit traffic that is carried on by a thousand others, who feel no such scruples and thrive by means of it, finds himself and his family reduced in consequence to extreme poverty—would it be any wonder if he too in time adopted different sentiments ?

But all this is nothing in comparison with the cases of real martyrdom which occur in domestic and civil life, as they formerly did in the Church. The father who is obliged to toil himself to death for his family—the husband whose wife harasses him to death—the citizen on whom judicial murder is committed—the soldier who is forced to sacrifice himself for his country—what! are these too to be debarred from putting the question—*What compensation shall we receive for it?*

Let it not be urged, that it is the same throughout all Nature, in which parts are sacrificed for the whole, and therefore the same question ought to be asked in regard to them. To this it might justly be replied: It makes a great difference whether the being which is sacrificed for the whole can put this question itself or not. All those inanimate, or if animated, yet irrational beings, which die or perish for the benefit of the whole, cannot ask it: they have no conception of their sacrifice, and they must die or perish some time or other. Man, on the other hand, can put this question: he knows full well that he is sacrificed, and his knowledge gives him a right to enquire—Why am I precisely doomed to this fate, and *what recompense shall I receive for it?*

As then in all the cases here cited no answer can be given to the question if there is not another life after death; it thence follows that Man must hope for immortality, because he would otherwise have no incentive to such, in a high degree, good actions, to say

nothing of the perseverance in them. He would find himself completely forlorn and without any support : what then must he do ? Why, at least save the temporal, since he would have no expectation of the eternal ; and withdraw himself from every one of those duties which might even cost him his existence.

Philosophers, who nevertheless maintain that even in such situations the mere sense of duty ought to support the sufferer, have never been subject to trials of this kind ; and therefore they must not take it amiss of us if we would rather wait to see how they would conduct themselves in case they should ever befall them. It is still a question too, whether those who are perfectly sincere, when they assert that their mere sense of duty would give them fortitude enough to suffer and die for the good cause, may not be influenced by an obscure presentiment of eternity. This may be the case without their being precisely aware that it is so : for we frequently ascribe this or that disposition of mind to this or that exciting cause, though it originated in a totally different one. Nay, it may even be too, that, at some former time at least, the belief in eternity founded, or at any rate strengthened, the sense of duty in these philosophers, and that they would not now possess it at all, or not in so great a degree, if that belief had never existed in them. Who can trace the origin of all his conceptions ? It is not to be denied that all of us from our youth learn the doctrine of a future life, and that it is emphatically inculcated as a main point in our reli-

gious instruction : what philosopher, then, can determine how much or how little influence it formerly had in the formation of his sense of duty ? If the latter still subsists without the former, does it thence follow that it would have been established without it ? If the sense of duty had been fully developed before any religious instruction was received, the case would be widely different. It is on the contrary a fact which needs no farther proof, that in all of us it was subsequently developed, and therefore none of us is able to calculate how far, not only religion in general, but each of its doctrines individually, may have co-operated in its developement.

It is represented as vicious that Man should desire advantage from his good actions ; in reality it is no such thing. He whose benevolent heart prompts him to seek his own happiness in promoting the happiness of others, ought not to be taxed with impropriety if he wishes eventually to secure something for himself.

And then—is the good man to carry his disinterestedness so far as even to close the avenues of his heart against pleasure on account of his good actions ? No, I receive for answer ; in this very pleasure, which arises from the consciousness of having acted agreeably to his moral nature, let him find the recompense of his virtue and be satisfied with it !

Well, that would be something ! Poor Man then is at least allowed the right not to be obliged to do good wholly without reward. He may rejoice then in the good he does : he may rejoice by anticipation before

he does it; he may rejoice whilst doing it; he may rejoice afterwards when he has done it—may he not?

“Granted! But it is the pleasure afterwards that is his fairest reward; for, before the action he does not know whether he may even but partially succeed; and while it is being done, he cannot tell for certain whether he shall completely succeed: but what delight does it give the heart years afterwards to have saved the honour or the life of one’s worst enemy; to have drawn upon one’s self great persecution by preventing great villany; to have incurred the most imminent danger for the public weal; and to have borne severe unmerited sufferings with unshaken fortitude!”

But in what predicament is this pleasure which a man derives from his good works, when he has to suffer martyrdom itself? Previously, the conception of the exquisite agonies attendant on it would make probably no other impression than this—*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*. In the moments of death the agonies themselves cannot produce any pleasure: think only of the—*I thirst!* And afterwards?—Where is then an *afterwards* for the martyr, if there is no *existence after death*? Is it not evident then that, in those who consider themselves as possessed of fortitude enough to undergo martyrdom from a mere sense of duty, an obscure presentiment of immortality co-operates unknown to themselves? It would be extraordinary, if Man should on occasion of his less noble actions experience by anticipation the purest pleasure before they were performed, the most exqui-

site real pleasure during the performance, and many years afterwards the sweetly soothing pleasure of recollection ; but that from the noblest of actions, from submitting to martyrdom itself, he should neither have pleasure by anticipation, nor pleasure at the moment, and least of all subsequent pleasure. In this case again, what becomes of congruity in his nature ?

And, if Man be allowed the right of deriving advantage from his virtue, in so far as his internal happiness is increased by it, I cannot see why he might not also desire that his external happiness should be increased by it. He needs this also ; nay, when it is wholly wanting, the other is of little or no avail, and he is exceedingly disturbed in its enjoyment. If it is wrong to say this too, Man must first be taught the art of divesting himself of his human nature and nevertheless remaining Man. Let one of those who require this first set us the example, that we may see how it is to be done.

The fact is, when it comes to the pinch and our philosophers have to undergo the torture, whether it be that commonly so called, or the torture of hunger, or the torture of ignominy, or the torture of the gout, or any other torture, they show themselves to be men just like the rest of us, and thereby confirm the principle—that it is the duty of Man to cherish not only his moral but also his sensible nature, and that he has of course a right to promote by his good actions not only his internal but also his external happiness.

Should he be required entirely to disregard the latter, he must find this absolutely incompatible with his nature; and the internal alone, if he is to have nothing more than that, only procures him in his eyes compensation for it when he can hope for an eternity, in which his external happiness also shall be perfect in proportion as he was a loser here by his good actions. Any other morality than this may be adapted to trees and stones but not to men.

If there is ever so good a man, if there is any man who from a mere sense of duty loves to do good, let it cost him what it will, must not such a man take still greater pleasure in doing it, if there is a life after death? And were it only with a view that his internal happiness might be thereby rendered more durable, and that he might enjoy the satisfaction arising from his good actions the longer, nay for ever, must not this single idea prove a more powerful incentive to good? To deny this would be to manifest an obstinate determination to oppose truth. Now, by reason of our moral nature it is our duty to hold fast every idea that can essentially strengthen us in the performance of our duties. The hope of a future state after death evidently strengthens us in all our duties, especially in the more arduous of them—we *can* have it, for it is possible that we continue to exist—we must therefore hold fast this hope, *and it is our duty to believe in a future state after death.* This belongs also to the moral order, which, precisely for this reason, that Man is

destined by his nature to virtue, cannot be an idle dream.

This argument, I must confess, has led me to a conclusion that makes a stronger impression upon me than I expected. Happy ! thrice happy ! I shall soon, very soon, walk in the light—I who could at first perceive nothing but the shadow of death all around me !

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

SEVENTH ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE
STATE.

Now I will not again look back till I have arrived at the conclusion of my enquiries. Here I rejoice before-hand in the effect which all together they will produce upon me! But this shall not prevent me from duly weighing every future position, or cause me to find any thing heavier, or on the contrary lighter, than it really is.

One of the first discoveries which our reason makes in the external world, and which during the rest of our lives forces itself upon our attention, which way soever we turn our eyes, is, that all things which exist or take place around us stand in the mutual relation of causes and effects. No sooner have we made this observation, than we begin to perceive that this relation depends on everlasting laws, and that one of the principal of these laws is, *that the same kind of causes always produce the same kind of effects*. Hence we are enabled, if we are attentive observers, to predict many

things that will happen, and we might term this arrangement *the administration of justice in the sensible world*.

Needs there now any proof that Man also must be subject to this arrangement of Nature, and that too agreeably to the same laws?—he, who on the one side, belongs to the sensible world, and whose body is composed of the same materials as every thing else?—he who unites in himself so many powers, all of which may become the causes of effects, and often of the greatest effects? In what a situation would he be, if he were exempted from the grand law of Nature, that the same kind of causes produce the same kind of effects! What should he do to accomplish this or that, if he did not know that this or that application of his activity, and the employment of such or such means, would produce the desired effect? If his operations invariably led to a different or even a contrary result, he would be doomed to be the most perplexed of all beings; his life would be a real game of chance; and the wisest course he could pursue after ninety-nine such experiments, would be to let the hundredth alone, to fold his hands in his lap, and to do absolutely nothing. But, this is not the case. When he digs, he really makes a hole, as he intended to do, and what he throws up really forms an elevation; when he sets out for a certain point, he actually gets nearer to and not farther from it; when he eats, his hunger is really appeased and not sharpened; when he sows wheat, he really reaps wheat and not

tares, and when he sows tares he really reaps tares and not wheat. So far indeed there is the same administration of justice for him as for the rest of the sensible world, and the general law of Nature, that the same kind of causes always produce the same kind of effects, holds good also in regard to him.

His moral actions are of far higher value than the others, and of course there must be on this side too the same *administration of justice* for him. Good actions must always have good consequences, and bad actions bad consequences. The former are called reward, the latter punishment. Virtue then must always make him happy, vice always miserable: for the same kind of causes must produce the same kind of effects, and actions bear the same relation to the circumstances that befall men, as causes to effects. The honest tradesman then must always have business, the dishonest lose his custom; the temperate man must enjoy the best health and attain the greatest age, the intemperate be ailing and die early; the frugal man must become rich, the spendthrift poor; the benevolent man must be respected, the selfish despised; the patient man must have peace, the contentious be involved in quarrels; the useful man must be sought after, the useless neglected.

But—gracious Heaven! how often do we see the reverse of all this! The utmost injustice prevails between the actions of men and their circumstances. The greatest part of the wealth is in the hands of unworthy owners, to whom it devolved by inheritance,

and who squander it in the grossest prodigality : while thousands upon thousands of honest labourers frequently in times of dearth have not bread enough to satisfy their hunger. Fidelity and integrity have rarely the good fortune to find friends ; but falsehood, hypocrisy, and flattery meet with them at once. Debauchees of strong constitutions frequently live the longest ; temperate men are often liable to continual illness from hereditary infirmity, and sink prematurely into the grave. Ignorant blockheads, if they belong to distinguished families, have patrons, or lend themselves to base purposes, rapidly attain honours, and rise from one post to another ; while the ablest men are continually overlooked, and scarcely dare venture at last to solicit the meanest employment. Power is in the hands of those who abuse it : impudent coxcombs adorn themselves, like the crow in the fable, with the feathers of others, and are admired ; while genuine modest merit remains unacknowledged. The more rigid any one is in his principles, the more he is disliked ; while he who agrees with every thing, who approves every thing, who lends himself to every thing, is a universal favourite. Should, however, the upright man so far succeed as to be on the point of grasping the reward of his virtue, some bold villain suddenly interposes and snatches it from his hand.

Such is the state of things in this world. Much more good passes unrewarded than is rewarded ; much more villany passes unpunished than is punished. More vicious than virtuous persons are happy ; more

virtuous than vicious persons unhappy. The common man, when he commits a fault, is chastised ; the great escape with impunity or buy themselves off ; princes do what they please, and think themselves above the laws, but punish the subject when he transgresses like them. The innocent person, who is seduced into guilt, is caught in the first fact and punished ; but the adept in wickedness carries it on under the guise of virtue, and escapes the notice of the judges, or makes a mock of the laws. Many seem to have a license for every thing ; the worse their conduct the more they thrive ; they live in splendour, fare sumptuously, and move in an endless round of pleasures. They thrive not only for years together, but throughout their whole lives, and in the end enjoy the last blessing, the blessing of a sudden death ; so that they have nothing to suffer previously, either from bodily pain or the reproaches of awakening conscience. Others, on the contrary, who are the most virtuous of men, and who have never been guilty of the slightest violation of their duties, live in poverty, despised and persecuted to the very last, sink under some lingering disease into the grave, and have no other comfort than death, which at last puts an end to all their sufferings.

Still Man is destined to virtue, still justice is administered in the whole sensible world. There must therefore be another state, in which rigid justice shall take place for the moral world ; there must be a life to come, in which a more perfect order of things shall

admit of the virtuous receiving the reward which was here withheld from him, and the vicious the punishment which he here found means to escape. In short, there must be on the other side of the grave that complete retribution which did not take place on this. And if there were no God, still there must be *justice*, for it follows immediately from the nature of things.—Think only of the countless multitudes of innocent men who have bled and fallen in battle—is it possible that they should go unrewarded for it? Think of those who perish by judicial murder—is it possible that they should be denied any compensation? How are the one to receive this reward, the other this compensation, unless, with their death a new life commences for them all?

This argument is certainly a strong one, but in the preceding discussion of it I perceive both light and shade.

At the very outset its foundation is manifestly faulty. The position, that the same kind of causes produce the same kind of effects, is true only upon condition that *nothing intervenes to prevent the effect and to become the cause of a different effect*. Every rational man therefore keeps his predictions to himself, or makes them conditional. In all Nature around us there are instances of obstructed, frustrated, perverted effects, and the vaunted administration of justice in Nature is a mere imagination. My oak wood, for example, which last year produced mast sufficient to feed thousands of swine, gave promise this year of

equal abundance, but a prodigious host of chafers fell upon it and left not acorns enough to afford a bellyful for a single hog. My peach-trees, which in the spring of last year were covered with blossom, and in autumn loaded with fruit, blossomed last spring as luxuriantly, but the fruit was totally cut off by a late frost in the month of May. A thunder-storm gathers and rapidly advances towards us; but at the distance of two or three miles it meets with a river which draws it aside. Thus it fares in the sensible world around us, and thus it fares in sensible things with ourselves. If we make a hole in loose sand, the sand immediately falls in and fills up the hole. If we attempt to build in the midst of a swamp we can never get a solid foundation. If we throw a ball ever so straight, and it encounters something by the way, we miss our aim. If we would remove a stone which we had but just strength enough to roll along, and some one were to sit down upon it, we should not be able to stir it from the spot. Let us have cultivated our field with ever so much care, the day before the harvest perhaps a hail-storm blasts all our hopes. The one sows, but reaps not; another reaps where he has not sown. Unfavourable seasons render the best husbandry unproductive, and very favourable ones give good crops to the worst. If it is thus in the sensible world, how should it be otherwise in the moral. Intervening circumstances can alter and derange the relation between the actions of men and their fortunes, just as they do every where else the relation between causes and

effects. Virtue goes unrewarded and vice unpunished for the same reason that many a one sows and does not reap, and many a one reaps where he has not sown. Hail destroys the crop. A villain seizes the reward of virtue. The wind wafts into a garden seed that springs up and produces fruit, and a patron promotes a vagabond and raises him to honours and emoluments. What is done in the one case by wind and weather is done by men in the other ; that is all the difference : both are intervening things, which obstruct the operations of causes and interpose their own in their stead. Every thing proceeds naturally and according to the same kind of laws. As it is inherent in the nature of things that the same kind of causes, when they operate unmolested, produce the same kind of effects : so it is inherent in the nature of intervening things, that the same kind of causes, because they do not operate unmolested, produce *not* the same kind of effects.—If the foundation of the evidence is so faulty, how can the evidence itself be otherwise ?

Let me read over what I have here written as often as I will, it is nevertheless true, that the law of causes and effects holds good only on the above-mentioned condition. I am therefore compelled to doubt the universality of the administration of justice in the sensible world, without being led to do so by the facetious question, whether there is a law of stones and mosses, or an administration of justice for water and fire. The same law of causes and effects certainly applies to stones and mosses, to water and fire,

upon the above condition. And thus it follows from what I am now admitting, that intervening circumstances may make the virtuous unhappy and the vicious happy. But is it possible that a moral being can feel satisfied that things should go so perversely in his world as in the sensible world, and that intervening circumstances should be able to transform, according to appearance and result, the noblest actions into base, the basest into noble, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, right into wrong, and wrong into right? The sense of justice is too deeply implanted in the human soul, and developed at the same time with the first developement of reason; it is therefore like reason an essential property of Man. The man who acts most unjustly is aware of it, and confesses to himself that he should act more consistently with his nature if he acted justly; he is only dazzled by the lucre of injustice. Nay more, he who to-day is capable of committing the most flagrant injustice, will to-morrow demand justice if he has suffered the least wrong, and complain bitterly if justice is denied him; and one unjust man will condemn another. What would become of human society were it to be forsaken by the sense of justice? But how can this sense be kept up in Man, when Fate itself sets before him examples of every species of injustice? Is not a hint thereby given him to take the conduct of Fate as a pattern for *his* conduct? What an exaction upon him, that he should be just, when his destination itself is a tissue of injustices perpetrated upon him as

by an invisible hand ! If he shall act consistently with his moral nature, the issue of his actions must also be consistent with his moral nature. His sense of justice then guarantees to him justice also for himself. Now if this does not always take place for him here, because here it cannot always take place for him, and if it is at the same time possible for him to exist after death ; must he not, especially if he takes into account all the preceding evidences for a future state, feel himself inwardly constrained to believe in a life after death ? No sooner does he admit this, than his moral nature is set at once in perfect harmony with his destination. The effects of his actions are not then annihilated and lost ; they are only suspended by intervening circumstances belonging to this world, which cease with his death, and then allow free scope to those suspended effects. It would indeed be too gross a mockery of the vocation of man to virtue, if the hypocrite, who had learnt to assume the mask of virtue, whilst in his heart he was one of the most depraved of his kind, could even in death laugh at the credulous world, and were never to be exposed as the disguised villain. Assuredly, whoever means it well with virtue must coincide in this opinion.

Is it not, however, an evident exaggeration, to assert that more vicious than virtuous men are happy, and more virtuous than vicious men unhappy ? One may wrong Fate as well as mankind, and such an assertion is in my eyes a real injustice to Fate. No, the state of things is not so bad as that. I cannot help thinking

that this notion either proceeds from spleen, or that it can be entertained in such moments only when a man is suffering, or imagines that he is suffering, some flagrant injustice from Fate. The disposition to think that bad which is bad may become a passion, so that at last a person may consider every thing as bad. For the honour of humanity, however, I believe that all other sources of the exaggerated notion of the injustice of Fate lie in erroneous conceptions alone. These I will now seek to detect.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING ARGUMENT.

It is indeed a duty which I owe to the world and Fate to undertake this task. The erroneous conceptions lie so exposed that it is an easy matter to discover them. In regard to the revolting proposition that—"more virtuous than vicious men are unhappy, and more vicious than virtuous men happy"—every thing depends on the correct determination of the meaning attached to the words virtuous and vicious as well as happy and unhappy. There is a great difference between *being* really virtuous and really vicious, and merely *appearing* to be so; and there is as much difference between being really happy and really unhappy, and merely appearing to be so.

It is but too obvious that in this whole argument regard is had solely to *external* happiness and unhappiness. I will even admit that external happiness is *real* happiness, and that it belongs by right to the virtuous in preference to the vicious; still the question arises, whether we may not err egregiously in our estimate of the virtuousness and viciousness of men.

The Jews of old argued thus : “ Whoever is rich, whoever is the picture of health, whoever lives long, and so forth, is beloved by God. Would He otherwise bestow on him wealth, health, long life, &c. ? Now he whom God loves must be a righteous man,” and *vice versa*. We often draw in a different way conclusions that are just as false, and like them consider men as virtuous who are not virtuous, and others as wicked who are not wicked. An imperfect knowledge of mankind in general, the want of a spirit of observation and of opportunity to watch a person narrowly, satisfaction with external appearances, prepossessions against or in favour of an object, frequently cause us to form a totally false opinion of others. Many a one can assume a most exemplary appearance, carefully guard against any public violation of civil duties, has virtuous phrases continually in his mouth, shines in society with his acquirements, and is universally esteemed for his goodness of heart, liberality and benevolence. When we observe that such a man is not externally happy, we talk of the injustice of Fate and class him among the unrewarded virtuous. If we knew him better, we should not do him so much honour. We should then discover in him under his virtuous exterior an arrant knave, who, to make amends for the restraint imposed on himself in public and the care which he takes in society not to offend against good manners, gives a loose to his passions when alone and not exposed to observation ; who chuckles, when he has prepossessed his fellow-citizens in his favour by fine sounding words ; who knows how

to show off to the best advantage the little that he has learned ; and who even keeps people in his pay to trumpet forth every good action, however trifling, that he performs. In short, we should then, instead of regarding him as unrewarded, say that he had much more than he deserved.

Many a one in like manner appears worse than he actually is. He is inattentive to what custom requires, or has not the talent of communicating what he knows, or seeks not to shine in public, or cares not to conceal any little foibles that he has, or at one time of his life has committed some indiscretion which others make it a point to bring forward on every occasion. When we see this man externally happy, we accuse Fate of partiality, and number him among the unpunished vicious. A more intimate acquaintance with his person and his peculiar sentiments would make us blush for our opinion. We should then see that he had already made ten-fold atonement for the indiscretion which he had committed ; that with one human failing he had many excellent qualities ; that he made amends for the neglect of trivial observances by the rigid performance of real duties ; or that he did good in secret without proclaiming his virtuous actions. In short, we should then, instead of numbering him among the unpunished vicious and the rewarded unworthy, assert on the contrary that he justly deserved all that Fate had bestowed upon him.

If we could thus form our opinion of every one

agreeably to the truth, we should certainly entertain more favourable notions of the justice of Fate. But how often is it the case, that we do not know ourselves, to say nothing of others? As there are hypochondriacs who charge themselves with all sorts of sins, not one of which they have committed, so there are pretended saints, who are grievous sinners, who merely give their vices softer names, and are never at a loss for pretexts to palliate every new commission of them. Lay your hands upon your hearts, ye accusers of Fate, and how many of you who now deem yourselves martyrs would be obliged to exclaim, "I fare as I deserve!" In regard to our fellow-men, we but too often regulate our opinion of them by the opinion of others. Every man, however, has his friends and his enemies, who from prejudice and passion represent him sometimes better, at others worse, than he really is. In short it is obvious that integrity is the way by which Man is most sure of attaining happiness. The best man moreover is frequently deficient in the requisite prudence, and thereby deprives himself of all the benefit of his virtue; whereas the vicious often contrive by means of this prudence to compensate for the want of integrity. Now we ought not merely to be virtuous, but also prudent. Many excellent men carry their hearts upon their tongues, and themselves betray their intentions and their plans, whence these are invariably frustrated, and others reap where they have sown; many are not capable of duly appreciating time and place; and thus

ruin every thing; many pass their opinions on others unasked and too loudly, and thereby make the most inveterate enemies for life; many in their ardour for virtue are too violent, too impetuous, and thus revolt the multitude; many are over-delicate and would not think of soliciting or accepting any one's good offices; or they cannot condescend to yield even in appearance to a more powerful opponent. Does not experience prove the truth of all this? Ye who will not admit it, at least take it not amiss if I defend Fate against you. Either you are just entering the world and have not had opportunities of judging; or if you have been long in it, ye must have shut your eyes to what others see, and your opinion cannot have any weight with us.

As, in the assertion, that more virtuous men are unhappy than happy, and more vicious men happy than unhappy, the words virtuous and vicious required to be corrected, so do the terms happy and unhappy. Admitting for once that external goods constitute the happiness of life, must they be in great profusion where they are to confer happiness? Must they all be there together? I should think that a competence would be a reward for virtue; must there absolutely be superfluity? Of what benefit is the latter? Is it not rather frequently injurious to the possessor? Is it not liable in particular to prove detrimental to his virtue, and have we not instances enough of men who were originally virtuous becoming wicked as soon as they attained great wealth, honour, and power? In like

manner I should think that *one* good compensates for the want of another, if a man is but grateful to Fate. We should take what is given us, without grumbling because it is not precisely what we could wish for; we should learn duly to appreciate its value; we should enjoy it and seek to enhance more and more to ourselves the possession and enjoyment of it.

We certainly consider many virtuous men as unhappy who are not so. We pity many a one because he is not more noticed, more promoted, while he at the same time is so content in his obscurity, that he has no wish to act a conspicuous part in the world. We lament that many a man is not possessed of a large fortune, which he deserves in preference to others; and he wants none of our commiseration, for he has enough for himself and his family, and is satisfied with it. We feel for many a one because he cannot appear in every brilliant circle, and he smiles at the routs and balls and assemblies of the great world, in the bosom of his home and the society of a few friends, who love him as their own soul. The honest labourer finds in his robust health more enjoyment than he would derive from house and lands; and many a roof of thatch covers a family which the world deems miserable, but which through love is supremely happy.

In like manner we certainly consider many vicious men as happier than they are in their own eyes. There sits the rich but solitary villain and has no enjoyment of his wealth. Either he is sometimes cheated

notwithstanding all his caution, and is ready to hang himself in despair ; or he trembles at every coming night, lest he should be haunted by uninvited visitors ; or he suffers under some painful disease, in the paroxysms of which he would gladly give his whole fortune to be relieved from it. What poor but healthy man would change situations with him ? The most magnificent palaces are often beautiful only without ; on entering you find nothing but splendid misery. Jealousy, discord, intrigue, hatred, nay even murder, reign within. Husband and wife live apart from each other ; sons and daughters prove degenerate. What happy husband, what happy father, of the lowest class, would exchange his little peaceful cot for such a deceitful palace ? In truth it is not all gold that glitters, neither is it written upon the brow of every one who is accounted happy, by what secret affliction he is oppressed. The prudent man conceals his sufferings from the world.

Taking all this together, is it not a truth as clear as the noon-day sun, that the assertion concerning so many unrewarded and unhappy virtuous men, and so many unpunished and happy vicious men, is a gross exaggeration ? When we add to this, that the notion of happiness is evidently too narrow, if we understand by it mere external happiness ; that the *internal* also belongs to it, and that this is properly speaking, the *true* happiness of men ; the government of Fate is still more justified. Men cannot wean themselves from the habit of attaching to the

word *happiness*—the idea of wealth, distinction, power, &c.; and they ought, out of respect to themselves, to learn to think otherwise. Does not Man throw himself away when he allows the world out of himself and its perishable goods to have the power of making him happy? Ought he not to insist firmly that nothing can make him happy but his own heart?

Now this inward happiness, which is the most essential, cannot be attained by any vicious man; it is the exclusive property of Virtue and her votaries. To external happiness there are certainly many crooked, many illicit ways, that Vice can pursue; but the way of Virtue to it is the straight-forward and more honourable one. To inward happiness on the other hand there is but a single way, and this it is that Virtue points out. Is not this pre-eminence enough for the virtuous? Is not this the most signal justice that is administered? In this way not one virtuous individual goes unrewarded; genuine, inward happiness is conferred on each; and not one vicious individual escapes unpunished: to him alone is genuine happiness denied. Self-satisfaction, the silent approbation of a man's own heart, the consciousness of his worth, his goodness, and his usefulness, indemnify him for the want of external goods; and he who has the latter, without having at the same time a good conscience, has no more than nothing. Ye poor, ye despised, ye who are shut out from the pleasures of the world, wish not to be able to change with the

Cræsus who rolls along in yon splendid equipage to the brilliant ball! At his heart gnaws the worm that never dies; in his bosom burns the fire that is never quenched.

All this is true : still it proves only that Fate is not the author of so much injustice upon earth as is complained of; but by no means that complete justice, *justice such as it ought to be*, is administered by Fate. The distinction between the really and the reputed virtuous and vicious may be perfectly correct; but still many really virtuous go unrewarded, and many really vicious unpunished. It may be alleged that they have their internal reward and internal punishment; but it has been already observed, that great external misery disturbs even the enjoyment of internal happiness. Man would not be man were this not the case. The continuance of violent bodily pain, for example, must dishearten and deject, let the virtuous sufferer be ever so conscious of his worth : under the pressure of extreme poverty, or when obliged to flee from furious persecutors, the best of men, on putting to himself the question—Why hath this befallen me? must feel profound melancholy! and he who is always misjudged, despised, thrust back, begins at length himself to doubt his own worth. It is equally true, on the other hand, that there are externally happy vicious men whom internal misery does not make unhappy. There are knaves and bloodsuckers, who have amassed wealth by means of a long series of inhumanities, and who have never felt any worm

gnawing at their hearts. There are voluptuaries, who rejoice that the fire in their bosoms is not quenched, because they thus have still ardours to cool; for in this consists their chief delight. Is it then enough to put off the virtuous with merely internal happiness, in case he could really enjoy it unmolested? Shall the unworthy and the wicked alone revel in pleasures here upon earth? Who has a better right to them than the virtuous man, who is incessantly promoting the welfare of others? Does not his heart also beat for the pleasures of sense? Must it not cut him to the soul to see that it is precisely *his virtue* by which he is deprived of them?

I perceive then but too clearly that, notwithstanding all that can be advanced in justification of Fate, the evidence from its defective administration of justice maintains its rank among the evidences of a future life. There must be justice in the moral world, or the whole moral world would be a monstrosity. Here it is not as it ought to be: there must therefore come a state in which it shall be what it ought to be. I mean not to say, that the virtuous shall there enjoy the external happiness which they had not here; there must, however, be in the next world sufficient external happiness, and this the good man must possess in the same measure in which he was here deficient in it, and pre-eminently there above the wicked, who enjoyed more of it here than he. And this his perfect external happiness must once enable the good man to enjoy his inward happiness without molestation; and

the want of external happiness there must cause the wicked to feel there in its full extent their internal unhappiness, of which they had no feeling whatever here. If this is the case, it is so because the vicious man received here so large a portion of terrestrial goods ; he received however the less valuable share, and something he must receive, that justice may be exercised towards him also, because even the very worst of men still does *some* good which must also in the end be *rewarded*.

When I come at length to the consideration of the thousands on whom *human* justice has committed murder, and on the hundreds of hundreds of thousands who for so long a series of ages have fallen in battle —O yes! exclaims my heart, there must be an existence after death! It would be in truth a horrible idea, an idea that would be sufficient to stifle and to annihilate the moral sense in the whole human race, if these were doomed by Fate to suffer and die, without ever receiving from Fate any compensation and reward! To the other martyrs in Nature, which as inanimate or irrational beings are sacrificed for the whole, we cannot, as has been previously observed, on this point appeal: it is a totally different case with rational beings, who know as martyrs that they are martyrs. These must know that they shall receive compensation for their martyrdom; or they would be fools, in the strongest sense of the word, if they suffered themselves to be sacrificed. The very knowledge of their martyrdom would serve them for an intimation,

of which inanimate and irrational beings are not susceptible, to save themselves from it by all the means in their power.

I conclude this meditation with joy, and can affirm from the very bottom of my soul, that it has exceedingly strengthened me in my hopes of a future life.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

EIGHTH ARGUMENT IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE
STATE.

I now come to the *last* argument for a future state. With a mind strongly disposed to joy I proceed to its discussion ; but still I will be upon my guard lest my heart might perhaps at last mislead me.

Man is the final end of the whole terrestrial world ; as such he need not fear annihilation, had he even to suffer a thousand deaths.

The first question which here occurs and which I must answer is this :—Does not the admission of ends involve the idea of a rational being, by whom those ends were planned—and consequently does not this argument involve the *idea of a God* ?—If this is the case, I must lay aside the whole argument, for the *idea of a God* shall not enter, at least not yet, into this first series of my meditations. Let me consider this point.

Every thing around me in Nature is in motion ; all powers are at work. One operation is succeeded by

another, this again by another, and so on. At length, after many operations a complete something is produced. This something would not be produced, had not the operations previously taken place, and each of these operations could not have taken place, had not the preceding taken place. Is it then one and the same thing if I say—the second operation could not have taken place unless the first, nor the third unless the two preceding had taken place ; and the complete something could not have been produced unless all these operations had preceded—or if I say—the first operation took place that the second might follow, the second that the third might follow, and so on ; and all these operations took place that the complete something which we here see might be produced ? Is it not one and the same thing if I say, the first operation generated the second, the second the third, and so on ; and all these operations together at length generated the complete something—or if I say—the end or aim of the first operation was the second, the end of the second, the third, and so on, and the end of all these operations, the end of all these ends, the grand end, the final end, was the complete something produced ? Am I not the more justified in using the latter mode of expression, when I see the same operations succeed each other thousands of times in the same manner, and discover in the end invariably the same result ? I can therefore speak of ends, of final ends of all the powers operating around me, and of all the arrangements which are found in Nature,

without incurring a just suspicion that I merely carry the idea of an end into Nature. I can speak of Nature without being absolutely obliged to entertain the notion of a rational being, or even of a Supreme Being, which devised, planned and maintains these ends. And thus the argument concerning Man, as *the final end of the whole terrestrial world*, certainly belongs to the series of my present meditations.

But must not every one who would proceed soberly and safely admit that the ends of Nature are far from lying exposed to our view ; that for this reason observers in all ages have drawn numberless false conclusions, which others have attempted to rectify ; that their corrections again have been rectified by a third set ; and that there is nothing in regard to which men are so much in the dark, as the doctrine of the final ends of the things and arrangements about them ? How then can we possibly pretend to judge of the final end of a whole planet, and of every thing that is passing in it ? In such limited beings as we are is not this the height of presumption ? Is it not most absurd when at last the presumptuous mortal, who takes it upon him to determine the final end of the whole terrestrial world, sets himself up as this final end ?

Who will deny that we are yet ignorant of the particular ends of numberless arrangements in Nature ? Does it thence follow that we cannot assign the end of any of them with certainty ? When we have numberless times observed that certain provisions of Na-

ture always follow each other in the same invariable order, and that they always produce the same ultimate result; must we not be able to say with thorough conviction that this or that is the end of such or such provisions? The grain of wheat, for instance, has a germ, which is developed into a shoot when it is deposited in the moist ground; the shoot produces a stalk, the stalk an ear, the ear blossom, the blossom grains like the original one; we can say with a truth which nothing can overthrow, that the end of the germ in a grain of wheat is the shoot; the end of the shoot the stalk; the end of the stalk the ear; the end of the ear blossom; and the end of the blossom new grains of wheat, consequently the final end of the germ in the grain of wheat is to produce many more grains like itself.

If in many thousand other cases we are incapable of assigning the ends of Nature with such precision, that is of no consequence. We are told, for example, that every phenomenon is already sufficiently founded on its natural cause; why then should you call in the aid of final ends into the bargain?—It is you who thus speak that call in their aid. If the phenomenon is founded on its natural cause, you say in admitting this that the former is the end of the latter. But why shall not something which follows be founded on that appearance, or why shall it not have its end? Come my friend and investigate this matter with me! Therein consists the ever-progressive increase in knowledge to which Man is destined, that he penetrates

more and more into the ends of Nature in her arrangements. It is precisely this process which leads to perfect knowledge, that at first totally false conclusions are drawn respecting this or that end of Nature; that after the lapse of a century the fallacy of these conclusions is corrected; and after another century these corrections again are corrected, and so on. The right point every where must at length be discovered, and we men are *capable* of seeking it; we *must* therefore seek it. It thence follows also that we cannot yet discover the ends of certain particular arrangements of Nature, but by no means that it is the height of human presumption to pretend to assign the final end of all the arrangements of Nature and of the whole terrestrial world. Should Man discover this final end precisely in himself, because he is obliged to discover it in himself alone—what then?—If it is but the truth, why should the acknowledgment of the truth be attributed to insufferable vanity? He might as well be charged with vanity if he discovered that he is the only one of all the terrestrial beings which enquires and is capable of seeking the end in the arrangements of Nature.

But must there be precisely a *final* end to all the arrangements of Nature and to the whole terrestrial world? May not the whole notion of such a thing be purely imaginary? May it not be the case that we transfer it by an analogical conclusion from ourselves to Nature, and from our mode of proceeding to hers.

What! can it be that a whole stupendous series of ends, one of which invariably produces the next, should not at length combine to one general end?—that in this prodigious circle there should not be a centre to which all the radii converge? Can it be that Man should have a final end in all his proceedings—*his happiness*—and that the proceedings of Nature, which infinitely surpass his in point of perfect adaptation, should have no final end?

“ Well, then every thing which is produced, the final end for which it is produced, nay even all the intermediate ends, would tend to the completion of his being; and when his being is completed, the final end is attained—*it is happy*. The utmost possible multiplicity of all species of beings was destined to exist; the utmost possible multiplicity of all sorts of happiness was destined to be enjoyed. Whoever then is not satisfied with assuming that the final end of each particular being is its individual happiness, let him take this as the *final end* of all. Each being in fact exists for itself. If it afterwards seems to exist for others also, this is an accidental circumstance, a mere exception, an abuse.”

Here one absurdity seems to tread on the heels of another. What! every being exist for itself! In this case every being would be a world in itself. Now, a world consists of innumerable beings, which, precisely because they exist for each other, compose a world. It is manifestly false too that every being exists for itself. How do the stones exist for themselves? how-

the plants? Is it possible to attach any rational idea to this assumption? A being which, we are told, exists for itself must at least have sensation, or its existence for itself is an idea without meaning. What sort of happiness could the flint or the rock, the cabbage or the oak enjoy, that these should be the final end to themselves, and that these individual inconceivable ends should ultimately contribute to produce the final end of the whole terrestrial world, the utmost possible multiplicity of all sorts of happiness? And if things exist at the same time for others, can it be that this circumstance is purely accidental, that it is a mere exception, an abuse? Upon what then should numberless species of animals live and be happy, if they had not the vegetable world? how, in like manner, should numberless species of animals subsist, if they were not to prey upon other species? If now the former cannot possibly subsist without plants, and the latter without smaller, weaker and less sagacious animals—and they must certainly be destined to subsist—is it by way of abuse that they derive from them their means of subsistence? Are they not rather expressly directed to them by instinct? And what else is this but saying—*those things exist for them?*

“Be it so!—let one exist for the other! The final ends of individual things cross one another then, without combining any where to a general final end. Here a centre is totally out of the question; it is

an incessant whirl, concerning which none can tell where it begins or where it ends."

I am myself of opinion that, in the first place, every sentient being exists for itself, but in the next that all sentient, like all insensible, beings exist at the same time for other beings. But—would not the perfection of the constitution of the terrestrial world attain its highest pitch, if there were in the end a species of being for which every thing existed in mass, after previously existing solely for others, or first for itself and then for others; and to the happiness of which every thing was obliged to contribute mediately and immediately? And is not this at the very first glance Man?

"*This, Man!*—Has not Nature made the most tremendous arrangements against him, nay manifestly for his destruction? Witness earthquake and pestilence. And then, how many beings are evidently injurious to Man! How many poisonous plants in the vegetable kingdom! How many venomous creatures in the animal! Instead of assuming that every thing else converges to a centre in order to the benefit of Man, we might rather assert that every thing concurs in this centre to accomplish his ruin; for there is nothing, absolutely nothing, but what is capable of being the occasion of his death."

Terrible as this certainly sounds, it may nevertheless be answered in the most satisfactory manner. Earthquake, pestilence, and the like, are not provi-

sions of Nature for the destruction of Man, but only incidents that must of necessity arise out of the most benevolent arrangements made in behalf of Man. Were Man to be exempt from those incidents, the benevolent arrangements in question could not take place. These however were made for the benefit of the whole human race ; but it is only a portion of mankind which suffers from those incidents. There would certainly be no earthquakes if the interior of the earth were not so constituted as it is ; but if it were not constituted as it is the earth could not be inhabited by men. In like manner, there would certainly be no pestilence if there were no sun ; but what would become of men without that luminary ? Let us not hear then of tremendous arrangements adopted by Nature for the destruction of Man ; but let us rather be told of the most beneficent arrangements of Nature in behalf of our whole species, whence afterwards, as a matter of unavoidable necessity, arise incidents injurious to certain portions of mankind.

As to the beings which are pernicious to Man, it only requires a little closer reflection on the subject to enable us to form a more correct opinion. The ends for which poisons are diffused throughout all Nature certainly belong to that section of the treatise on the ends of Nature in which men are not yet sufficiently versed ; but still we know enough to make us perfectly easy on that point. Nature herself has provided antidotes. Among the poisonous plants there are many which may easily be divested of their poi-

son and converted into wholesome food for men. Others serve for food to animals, which are eaten without injury by Man, or are devoured by other animals, of which again Man avails himself without detriment for his table. Poison, after it has passed through several transformations, ceases to be poison for Man. When Man once knows that it is poison, he can employ it for the purpose of destroying pernicious animals. There can be no doubt, also, that we derive from venomous animals much greater benefit than we imagine. Perhaps they are placed around us, in order that, by secreting from the atmosphere the poison which we must otherwise inhale, they may act in the first place as conductors for diverting poisons from us, and in the next as innocent receptacles for them. Besides, what manifold benefits do we not receive from poisons, if we only take care not to introduce them into the nose or mouth ! Does then all the advantage which things have for us consist merely in their fitness for being eaten or drunk ? Ask the merchant, the artist, the colourman, if you would obtain a satisfactory answer to this question ! Lastly, as to the position that every thing about Man strives and unites to destroy him, and that there is nothing but what is capable of causing his death ; I readily admit that nothing can be thought of which has not caused the death of some man or other : but Man has been furnished with reason that he may avoid such causes of death, and if he duly cultivates and applies it, nothing, nothing whatever, can destroy him but his own perishable nature ;

and there is no other venomous tooth for him but the tooth of Time, which, indeed, in the end destroys every thing.

Methinks I hear some one exclaim—"Man, I suppose, will by and by have the presumption to assert that the sun, moon, and stars, exist for him too! His boast, that he is the final end of the whole terrestrial world is nevertheless founded only on the dominion over all things which he has contrived to usurp, and on the arbitrary power which he every where exercises. Has he not asserted that the birds sing for him, while it is evident that they sing for their mates? Has he not pretended that the flowers of the fields blossom for him, though every one sees that the bee first collects honey from them, and that they are afterwards eaten by the ox."

Granted that the bee collects honey from the flowers of the fields, and that they are eaten by the ox; yet the bee collects the honey for us, and for us the ox feeds upon them till he is fat and fleshy; and as mere receptacles of honey and food for cattle the flowers of the fields need not be adorned with the beauty which they display. Granted, that the nightingale and every other male bird sing for their mates, to relieve the tedium of the brooding season; still Man, endowed with reason, can alone judge of the greater or less excellence of their song. And if the earth were the only planet lighted by the sun, Man, for whom the whole terrestrial world exists, would be authorised to assert that he was also the final end of the sun's light. As

to the authority which Man exercises over all things, this authority, so long as he exercises it humanely, that is to say, tortures nothing unnecessarily, and destroys nothing for the sake of destroying, is an evidence that all things else ultimately exist for him. How can such an authority be considered as something which he *abusively* possesses and wrongfully usurps? Is it not an immediate consequence of his higher nature, of his reason? If the stone does not grow *abusively*; if the plant does not *abusively* derive its nourishment from the earth and air; if one animal does not prey upon another *abusively*; it is impossible to discover how Man should act *abusively*, if he really turns to his advantage every thing that he can turn to his advantage. Whoever *can* do this has also the *vocation to do it*, and commits no abuse if he does it. If, then, Man can turn the whole terrestrial world to his advantage, the whole terrestrial world exists for him; and if the whole terrestrial world exists for him, he must be the final *end* of the whole terrestrial world.

But there is another consideration which places this position beyond all doubt, and which I will discuss on my favourite eminence.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING ARGUMENT.

OH how delicious is it to-day here upon this eminence! What a view over the widely extended country, with its corn-fields and meadows, its hills and dales, its brooks and rivers, enwreathed by the beautiful blue wooded mountains that bound the horizon! And if even every thing which there exists, existed first for its own sake, and then for the mutual benefit of itself and other things, for whose benefit does the prospect of the whole exist? O lovely Nature! to no purpose wouldst thou display such exquisite beauty if Man did not exist to admire thy charms. Admitting even that every thing which exists, exists for its own sake, yet nothing is *beautiful* for its own sake alone. Admitting that every thing which exists, exists for the mutual benefit of itself and other things; yet every thing is beautiful solely and exclusively for Man. *The final end of the beautiful* in the whole terrestrial world is evidently Man. What besides him possesses susceptibility for it?

Neither is it enough that the utmost possible multiplicity of all kinds of beings should exist upon the earth, or that the utmost possible quantity of happiness of every kind should be there enjoyed: all the beings upon it know not that they exist in the utmost possible variety of species; all the happy beings upon it know not that the utmost possible quantity of happiness of every kind is there enjoyed. The knowledge of this is peculiar to Man alone, and thus all these beneficent arrangements of Nature concur in the provision made to enable him to derive from the pleasures enjoyed by all a totally distinct pleasure—the *pleasure of seeing every thing joyous around him*. To such a degree is Man the final end of Nature!

By the general survey of the beautiful whole Man is instigated to analyse its beauty, to examine individual parts, to investigate their mutual connexion and their relations to each other and to the whole; and with what astonishment is he then filled by the glory of Nature! Hitherto he was fascinated only by her *sensible* beauty, and had at most an obscure feeling of her order and perfection; he penetrates deeper and deeper into this order and perfection itself, and the more he does so the more he is transported by the grandeur, the sublimity, and the fitness of Nature. This was the last thing that was destined to take place on each star, and, as it were, to crown the whole, that on each star there should exist a species of beings which should admire it with a profound sense of the grandeur of all the arrangements connected

with it. This species of beings is thereby placed at the head of all the other numberless species upon it and is its final end. The only such being on the earth is Man. There has not yet been discovered, nor will there ever be discovered, any other being which shares with him either the sense of beauty in general, or of moral beauty in particular. Man, therefore, must be the final end of the whole terrestrial world. *He, who alone is capable of seeking and discovering the end of the beings and the arrangements upon earth—he must himself be the chief end of the earth.* What other end of all the order, perfection, and beauty of the terrestrial world can be conceived than this:—that when the utmost possible happiness of all possible kinds of beings has been thereby accomplished, a superior kind of beings, a kind of spirits, should, by the contemplation of this order, perfection and beauty, be trained to wisdom and virtue? Surely, surely, the wise and good man, who first admires the vast arrangements of Nature, who then imitates them on a smaller scale, and forms for himself upon their model *a little world of his own* in the midst of the great world—must be the final end of the earth, and of all the arrangements and beings upon it!

Does it, however, thence follow that Man need not fear annihilation, had he even to suffer a thousand deaths? On this point every thing depends, and therefore I will direct to it my whole attention.

Of the perishable nature and the real decay of all

other things around us we are speedily convinced. As they are merely subordinate ends, we consider them only as means that are to promote the attainment of the grand end—*the training of Man to wisdom and virtue*. Now all means pass away as soon as they have answered their purposes, and others are brought forward in their stead. Thus the human body itself is the mean of means for collecting wisdom and virtue from the contemplation of the terrestrial world ; and thus we are even tranquillized respecting the perishable nature and decay of the body, and find in this nothing contradictory, as soon as we know that *death is only a change of body*. Were, however, the perishable nature of Man to extend still farther, were the spirit of the man who has become wise and virtuous to cease to exist in death—for what purpose would all the inexpressibly grand, admirable, and astonishing arrangements for training him to wisdom and virtue have been made in Nature ? For what purpose indeed would the earth itself exist ? Is it reasonable to believe that after all the bustle which has been so long going forward upon it, a whole planet exists *for nothing* ? And is not this the case if its principal end is lost ?

But how can it be said that the principal end of the earth is lost, if Man has in fact become wise and virtuous upon it ? Was it not for this end that all the grand and admirable arrangements of the terrestrial world were designed ? If this takes place, its principal object is attained. What more can be desired ?

To this I might in the first place reply, as it has

already been fully stated, that but few persons advance so far as to become wise and good. With regard to all the rest the principal end of the earth is, strictly speaking, *lost* and remains unattained. And again, if it is true that not a single individual becomes so wise and so virtuous as he could have become, had he lived longer ; then the principal end of the earth is lost with the whole human race.—Supposing, however, that not only an individual here and there, but the whole human race, trained itself up to wisdom and virtue ; supposing that all men became as wise and virtuous as they are capable of being ; for what purpose should all men become as wise and as virtuous as possible, if death were annihilation for them ? To this question let the first philosophers of all ages reply ; I am curious to hear their answer.

The principal end of a whole planet must be something permanent, something everlasting and imperishable ; or it is impossible to conceive for what purpose it was designed to be attained. If, then, no higher end of the earth than the wise and virtuous man is conceivable, how preposterous is the inference : Man has here become wise and good and through wisdom and virtue happy ; consequently the principal end of the earth is attained ? For what purpose is he become so, *if he is not to be so hereafter* ? If Man again becomes in death what he was before his existence, that is to say, *nothing*—he had better been left in his nonentity. *Wherefore should he have made the round from nothing to nothing* ?—Answer—*For nothing, abso-*

lutely nothing ! O the intolerable answer ! Can any thing be more at variance with reason ? The more I think of it the more revolting it is. Thus, then, every thing would be a merely transient appearance, and the life of Man and the terrestrial world, with all its arrangements, no better than passing shadows upon the wall.

But a new idea occurs to me. It is not individual men, but the whole human race, all mankind, that are the principal end of the earth :—does the human race become extinct ? On the contrary, does it not in reality become from time to time wiser and better ? How can it be asserted that by the annihilation of Man in death the chief end of the earth is lost ? It would only be lost *by the extinction of the human race* itself. As it is, this end is gradually more and more attained. Each succeeding generation can take the wisdom and virtue bequeathed to it by its predecessors for a foundation and continue building upon it ; its successors may do the same, and so on to all eternity.

Even this representation of the matter carries with it nothing cheering for me. At this rate there must at length come a generation, which had arrived at the highest point of all earthly wisdom and of all earthly virtue. Thenceforward it would remain stationary. Now this would be either the last generation or not. If it were the last, it would be subject to death like all the preceding generations. What should exempt it from the general law of death ? But for what purpose should there still be arrangements on earth for man-

kind, when mankind should have become extinct? Is the earth itself also destined to perish along with the human race? For what end has the earth existed? But if the generation which has arrived at the highest point of all earthly wisdom and of all earthly virtue is not the last, what are the succeeding generations to do? Surely not stand still at that point? Go they must. *Forward* they cannot go any longer; consequently — *backward!* Oh deplorable destination of mankind! So then it is to advance through a thousand generations to the highest point of human perfectibility, and when this is attained to retrograde through a thousand generations more to the brutal state, merely to pursue the same course over again, forward and backward, and that to all eternity! And for whose pleasure would such a spectacle be exhibited?

For that of God, do you suppose? The idea of Him shall not yet mingle with my meditations. But I should think that an all-wise being would have quite enough of human doings on earth, after he had witnessed them only once.

Neither is the representation relative to the bequest of human wisdom and virtue by any means correct. The notion of the incessant advance of mankind in knowledge and virtue is confuted by the whole history of the world. Not only have particular arts and sciences been actually lost, but mankind has certainly been often as far, nay, farther advanced than at many subsequent periods. Humanity and intellectual cul-

tivation travel from country to country, and religion itself travels along with them. Nay, there have been universal convulsions and devastations of the earth, which have at once destroyed the living sages and the books of the dead, and deprived the small surviving remnant of mankind of all the wisdom of all preceding generations. Again, who is there but knows the pernicious influence of war on human morality? A single general war has carried the whole more polished portion of mankind farther back in virtue than it is possible to express. Wars must cease before an incessant advance of mankind in virtue can be thought of; but when will wars cease? Earthquakes must cease before the everlasting progress of mankind in virtue will be any thing more than a pleasing dream; but earthquakes will never cease. A species of beings that is liable to such political convulsions can never arrive at the highest moral perfection. A planet that is liable to such convulsions of nature can never be the abode of beings perfectly wise. Mankind sometimes rises, at others sinks; sometimes it advances, at others retrogrades. If then the cultivation of mankind in general, the cultivation of the human species, is the chief end of the terrestrial world, it is obvious that by the mortality of its individual members the chief end of the terrestrial world is lost, if death is annihilation for them. The chief end of the earth is accomplished only in case the species called human does not become extinct, and moreover the individuals which compose it, not-

withstanding their mortality, are still immortal. And if Man is the final end of the whole terrestrial world, it certainly follows that Man must continue to exist in death. It is thus and thus only that human life acquires any value; it is thus and thus only that the aspect of the whole terrestrial world acquires dignity. The whole terrestrial world would otherwise be a mere puppet-show. But if the spirit of Man is immortal, the earth has a sublime and essential end; all its admirable arrangements then first acquire their admirable character; and we may make ourselves easy though mankind does not arrive at perfection here, but sometimes keeps advancing and at others retrograding. The earth is only the first world for Man; the first mean by which he is to arrive at wisdom and virtue. Man himself, as its final object, continues to exist; and when he at last quits the earth, it ceases indeed to be a mean for him; but he himself, its end, remains, and is furnished with another mean, that is, he soars to some other orb, where higher arrangements are destined to conduct him to higher wisdom and virtue.

This is not merely a bold hypothesis, incapable of demonstration, of which Nature herself gives no intimation, but the language of the most artless, unsophisticated human understanding, every word of which is suggested by Nature. But, indeed, he who deems nothing worthy of attention but what chimes in with his theory, will turn a deaf ear even to the voice of Nature herself.

My meditations on the rational arguments for a future state, without any reference to the idea of a God, are now completed, and the last evidence has in my opinion crowned all the preceding. Either every thing which exists and which takes place is a mere phantom, a dream, a bubble, or I must continue to exist in death. My faith in this is now established, and I will seek to render it still more immoveable by a review of all the eight arguments on which it is founded. This to me so solemn and momentous business I will not long defer. The weather is still so fine, that to-morrow morning shall be devoted to it. And where could this sacred act be more appropriately performed than on this eminence?

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

SUMMARY RECAPITULATION OF ALL THE ARGUMENTS OF REASON IN BEHALF OF A FUTURE STATE.

AT this tranquil hour, when all the objects of Nature, gradually emerging from the shades of night, again become visible; when every thing that lives again awakes to life and activity—how delightful it is upon this eminence! It is as though all Nature celebrated with me the most solemn act of my life which I am about to perform. Yonder, where the east begins to be tinged with red, yonder the magnificent luminary of day will presently appear: meanwhile I will step behind this rock and give myself up to the irresistible force of the collective evidences furnished by reason in behalf of a future state.

“The idea *body* does not wholly comprise the idea *Man*; and it is not absolutely necessary that *I* should perish when my body is dissolved, but it is possible that I may continue to exist after death.”—Such were

the positions with which I set out ; I have demonstrated them to myself, and now,

It is true, that there is no human affliction for which there is not also consolation : can it then be, that for the idea of death, the severest of mental afflictions—for such it really is notwithstanding the boasted indifference with which I at first deluded myself—and for this alone, there is no consolation ? Nothing, nothing in the world, is capable of soothing my mind in regard to death, but the idea that I shall continue to exist in spite of death.

It is true, that this existence after death appears most desirable, and that the more I reflect on it the more I long for it. This longing is a real instinct, an instinct which awakes within me at the same time with reason ; consequently a genuine natural instinct, one of the more noble of the natural instincts, nay, the very noblest of them all. And shall all my other natural instincts be really gratified, and this—just this one—which is every thing to me, remain ungratified ?

It is true, that I, as man, am destined to the highest possible happiness which this planet affords. To this my reason evidently lays on all sides the foundation. Instead, however, of making me as happy as possible, it makes me as miserable as possible, if death is annihilation ; for it gives me a foreknowledge of death, which incessantly torments and renders me more wretched than any brute animal is capable of being. For this foreknowledge, if I am to enjoy the least

happiness, I must be compensated ; and nothing can compensate me for it but the foreknowledge, on the other hand, that I shall continue to exist in death.

It is true, that I possess far too many faculties and powers, and am the most incongruously constituted of all beings, if this brief life is my whole destination. Very few of my higher faculties attain a considerable degree of cultivation ; faculties, of which I am not even aware, lie dormant within me ; and the more I exercise any of the powers of my mind, the stronger it becomes. Here are unbounded, inexhaustible stores for me ; what else can they be but intrinsic capabilities of my nature for everlasting duration ? And if, in the material world, nothing is, strictly speaking, lost, how is it possible that these should be lost ?

It is true, that I know no greater happiness than to perfect myself more and more by means of these faculties, and to advance in wisdom and virtue. It is the voice of my nature, which cries : Onward and onward still ! Here I give to my instinct of perfection precisely that direction which is most consonant with my higher nature, my moral being. Shall then every thing else be in the most beautiful harmony, my faculties and powers adapted to immortality, and my instinct to cultivate and apply them for ever, and shall the main point be wanting ?—shall immortality itself be denied me ? For what purpose, then, would be these faculties, these powers ? For what purpose would be this instinct ? Either Man is destined to be

the most incongruous, the most contradictory of beings, or he must continue to exist in death.

It is true, that the mere sense of duty is not capable of keeping me virtuous in all the circumstances of life. If it shall be capable of doing this, if the continual regard to my moral nature shall cause me to act under all circumstances in a strictly moral and virtuous manner, my moral nature must first acquire its true dignity by an everlasting existence. Nothing but the hope of a future life supports me in my most arduous duties; and if I am called to perfect virtue, I must also be called to immortality. What good deed is there in which I am not strengthened by immortality? The belief in it is the highest incitement to virtue; I must therefore hold it fast.

It is true that there must be justice in the moral world, and that at present it is not perfectly administered. Let me strive as I will to justify Fate, still there are imperfections and deficiencies, great imperfections and deficiencies, in its government. Owing to circumstances and the present connexion of things, indeed, it cannot be otherwise; but this ought not to affect the everlasting laws of moral beings, the everlasting laws of a justice which rewards and punishes. Unfortunates without number die crying for justice, and it must be afforded them some time or other.

It is true, that Man is the final end of the whole terrestrial world. What higher end can be conceived than He, the sole species of being which not only discovers order and beauty in the works of Nature, but

actually imitates that order and beauty, and, by selecting and combining the beauties scattered throughout Nature, that is to say, by art, frequently surpasses his model? If then Man is the final end of the terrestrial world, he must continue to exist, even though he had to suffer a thousand deaths; for the final end of a world must absolutely be something imperishable, something everlasting; or a whole world would exist for no ultimate purpose, for nothing: and if the final ends of the other worlds were in the same predicament, the whole universe and the whole scheme of existence of all things would be a mere juggle.

Compressed into this narrow compass, the arguments of reason in behalf of a future existence for Man, possess a force that is irresistibly convincing. So I thought, and happily I have not expected too much from them. Let me now try to condense them still more!

If there is no future state for Man, death is annihilation for him; and he who has consolation for every thing else, has not then the slightest comfort for the severest of all his afflictions—his natural longing after immortality is then a cruel mockery practised upon him by his nature—his reason, which teaches him the foreknowledge of death, is then the most grievous of punishments—his stupendous faculties and powers are then the most senseless waste—he is then a fool to cultivate and apply them to any other purpose than sensual gratifications—every incitement to the noblest actions is then done away with—there is then no per-

fect administration of justice in the moral world—and the earth and every thing in it then exist for no ultimate end or purpose whatever.

But if death is not annihilation for Man, if Man continues to live after death, he has then for his greatest affliction the greatest consolation—his noblest instinct, like all his other instincts, is then gratified—reason is then the best gift that could be conferred on him—all his faculties and powers are then a masterpiece of harmony—he is then wise if he diligently cultivates and applies them—he has then the strongest inducement to remain virtuous under all the circumstances of life—the most perfect administration of justice in the moral world is then to be hoped for—the constitution of the earth is then the most sublime that can be imagined—in short, there is then every where consistency, whereas otherwise there would be every where contradiction; consistency between the faculties and instincts of Man; consistency in all the arrangements made around him for his benefit; consistency in the whole terrestrial world itself; every where the most complete and the most admirable consistency.

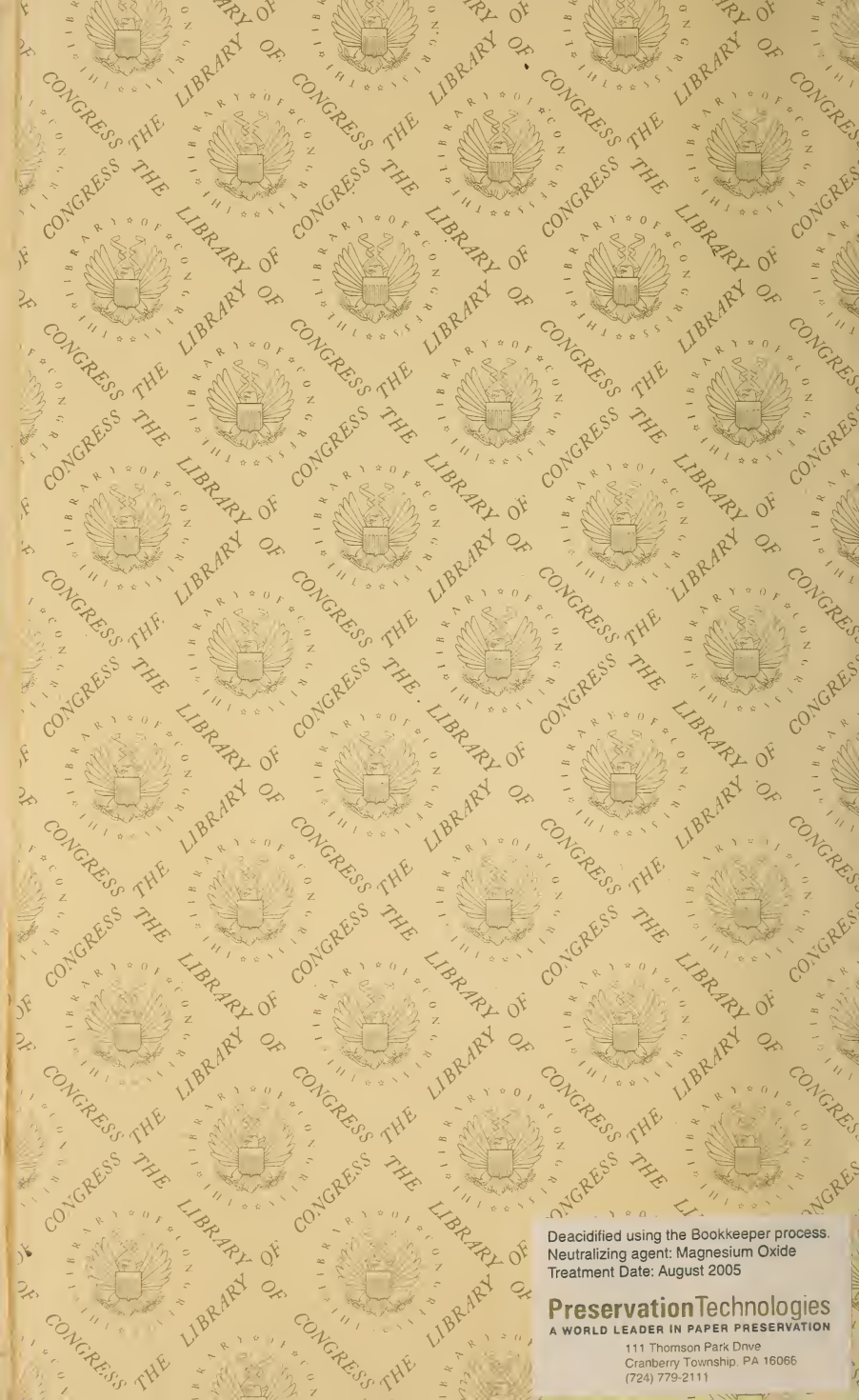
Now my belief in my immortality rests upon a foundation against which, according to the expression of the great Nazarene, the gates of hell shall not prevail. Never did I yet feel such happiness as at this moment. O glorious and inexpressibly sublime destination of Man! Now every thing has for me a grander aspect; every idea assumes a more lofty character. Yes, immortality! immortality! it is not till

he is initiated into the belief in thee that Man becomes truly Man!

Ha! with what majesty thou risest yonder, resplendent source of light! O sun, thou all in all to the terrestrial world, thou presentest, as it were, a sensible emblem of my expectations! As, after the past night thou hast brought back day, so after the last of my nights, there will again be day, everlasting day, and I shall walk in its light to all eternity!

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